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THE
GREEK THEATRE
OF
FATHER BRUMOY. K

TRANSLATED
By Mrs. CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for Mess. MILLAR, VAILLANT, BALDWIN, CROWDER,
JOHNSTON, DODSLEY, and WILSON and DURHAM.

MDCCLIX.

THE

GREEK EATRE



ROYAL HIGHNESS



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By Mrs.

SIR

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suffering me to be obliged the translation to the
public under the protection of your illustrious
Johnston, Dobson, and Wilson and DUNHAM.
name

MDCCLIX

The

D E D I C A T I O N

TO HIS
ROYAL HIGHNESS
G E O R G E,
PRINCE OF WALES.

SIR,
ON the day which fills every inhabitant of
Britain with expectations of continued
and uniform prosperity, may it be permitted
me to acknowledge, with the greatest respect,
my obligations to your Royal Highness, for
suffering me to introduce this translation to the
public under the protection of your illustrious
name.

The

DEDICATION.

The arts of the drama, for which I have presumed to solicit your Royal Highness's patronage, have been always honoured with the protection of princes, as the arts which add grace to precept, and teach virtue by multiplying delights.

Of the employments which engage the labours and studies of mankind, some are incited by the power of necessity, and some dictated by the love of pleasure : to works of necessity, we are driven by nature; in pursuit of pleasure, we are influenced by example. Nations may receive plenty from the cultivation of the soil, but they must owe their politeness to the refinements of the court ; and the encouragement which your Royal Highness has given to the endeavours of genius, has already kindled new ardors of emulation, and brightened the prospects of the learned and the studious, who consider the birth of your Royal Highness as the

DEDICATION

the birth of science, and promise to themselves
and to posterity, that from this day shall be
reckoned a more illustrious period of letters
and of patronage.

I am, with the profoundest respect,

SIR,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

Most obedient, and

Most humble Servant,

JUNE 4

CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

1759

DEDICATION

the birth of science, and promote to themselves
and to posterity, that from this day shall be
reckoned a more illustrious period of letters
and of patronage.

I am, with the greatest respect,

My dear Sir,
Your Readers will not, I am persuaded, be sorry to know, that
several parts of this work are translated by much able
hands than my own. Of those persons, who have favoured me with
their assistance, I am particularly obliged to the Right Honourable the
Earl of Cork and Chester, who has written a general preface to
the work, and translated the Dialogue of the
Greeks, that upon the Original of Terence, and the Parallel of
the Theatres.

CHARLOTTE LENNON

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

MY Readers will not, I am persuaded, be sorry to know, that several parts of this work are translated by much abler hands than my own. Of those friends, who have favoured me with their assistance, and whose names shall be mentioned in the proper place, I am particularly obliged to the Right Honourable the Earl of Corke and Orrery: who has written a general preface to the work, and translated the Discourse upon the Theatre of the Greeks, that upon the Original of Tragedy, and the Parallel of the Theatres.

ADVERTISEMENT.

My Readers will not I am persuaded, be sorry to know, that several parts of this work are translated by men whose hands they may own. Of these friends, who have favoured me with their assistance, and whose names shall be mentioned in the proper place, I am particularly obliged to the Right Honourable the Earl of Carlisle and Orkney: who has written a General Preface to the work, and translated the Discourse upon the Theme of the Greeks, that upon the Original of Tragedy, and the Tragedy of the Trojans.

P R E F A C E.

THE French language, although agreeable and easy to read, is difficult and harsh to translate; smooth as ivory to the sight, rough as iron to the touch. The general observations made on the two nations of England and France, will, in some measure, hold in their language. The one is more light and airy; the other more slow and solid. The French flutter in the air; the English walk majestically on the ground. The French have a great scope of language, but their expressions are seldom nervous, and scarce ever sublime. Monsieur *Voltaire*, the glory of their present day, writes with amazing spirit and vivacity. He often shines like a meteor, with a light, that is, glaring, transient, and reflected: he wants solidity to make it equal and permanent; but sometimes, like the phosphorus, has the peculiar quality of shining in the dark. He has modestly intitled his last work, *Essai sur l'histoire general*, An essay upon universal history. It is an enchanting performance. If it is not history, it is something much more pleasing, and perhaps not less instructive. Although the language of some nations may be more adapted to history than that of others, yet the constitution of the country will in a great measure warp their genius. On this account, the English historians are more nervous and solemn, while the French are more

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weak

weak and diffusive, but often more amusing. Each nation has its own peculiar taste and judgment : nature otherwise must lose one of the chief points she delights in, variety.

The French have the theory of the sublime in great perfection. The turn of their language hinders them from fulfilling the practice. The defect seems to arise from the infinite numbers of thin particles and adverbs, expressive at once of so many different and important things. Their little phrases are another cause of their want of sublimity. *En effet, veritablement, pour ainsi dire, de plus, en un mot* ; and all such minute expressions, must weaken any language in the world. But the two noted and prevailing particles *y* and *en*, which are relative to every verb, every person and substantive whatever, at the same time that they save much trouble to the reader, are very embarrassing to the translator.

Our language is at present more correct and delicate, more expressive and enlarged, than in any other age, but it is not free from great imperfections : we have neither diminutives nor augmentatives ; till lately we had not even a dictionary. Our best and our worst writers might equally have claimed authorities. At length a judge arose : a dictionary (the work of one man, and he a genius,) was formed upon the plan of the dictionary *Della Creusa*, and the citations which he has given us, are decrees from whence we need not to think of an appeal. The grammatical part of our language is too confined and unvaried : our plural *s* seems to hiss out its own disapprobation. We abound in monosyllables. They make whole paragraphs appear as little and trifling as themselves. They wound our poetry, but they

they murder our prose. The French monosyllable *On*, which is applicable to all persons and all things, is injudiciously imitated in English by the word *One*. *One does not know what one has to say to one or t'other of them.* By the help of our eternal *s*, we give it a genitive. *One can scarce think it one's own* : and still to heighten the absurdity, we render it plural ; when by all grammatical rules whatever it must for ever remain singular. *The virtues I have recollected, are small ones in comparison of others.* These are absurdities which often prove contagious to the best writers, and from which the worst can never be exempt. An English dictionary of improprieties, errors, low ungrammatical phrases, obsolete, and inelegant terms, might be (although there is something laughable in the proposal) of real and serious use in its kind. Mr. Johnson has shewn us the line of beauty ; some other author might shew us the line of deformity. To acquire a true taste of what is either good or bad, we must see at once a sample of each. When two extremes are equally placed before our eyes, the sight will always direct the judgment. *This here* and *that there*, and the whole tribe of unnecessary expletives, when once inserted upon paper, would not only be banished from common conversation, but from the bar, the pulpit, the senate. The man who by custom filled up every sentence that he spoke with oaths and curses, when he read over his own common dialect, which had been taken down in writing by a friend, startled at the sight, and swore and cursed no more. Under all our disadvantages, which will be fully seen in Mr. Johnson's letter to the earl of Chesterfield, and in the preface to the English dictionary, we have no reason to doubt, that English purity might equal Attic eloquence.

elegance. There is a strength in our language, that never hinders it from being harmonious ; and harmony is as requisite in prose as in verse. The French poetry, of which Monsieur Brumoy introduces too many examples, is not relishable to an English ear. Like their music, it awakens, but it does not please. Their plays are in rhyme, and we have long ago despised, and laid aside so absurd a custom. The satires of Boileau, and the Henriade of Voltaire, are read by us for their subject, their matter, and their thoughts. The rhymes and the cadence of their verses are passed by ; or, if regarded, are disgusting. But although at present, in an open state of war with our neighbours of France, who from their situation, and the American territories belonging to each, must for ever remain our natural and political enemies, let us do justice to the genius and abilities of so lively, so elegant, and so polished a people. They particularly exceed us in criticisms, translations, agreeable letters, and entertaining novels. In their criticisms there is neither rage, sourness, nor abuse. In their translations may be found almost the whole fire and spirit of the original : nor have even Homer, Horace, or Virgil, suffered much in the prose hands of Dacier, Sanadon, and Catrou. French letters may be thought trifling ; but they leave a certain gay impression upon the mind, not hitherto impressed by any epistolary correspondence in England. Their novels are inimitable ; they represent the times, the manners, the disposition of the whole nation ; while we, to say the truth, are at once the constant detractors and imitators of our adversaries, and wandering from nature and probability, attempt only to represent persons who never existed even in imagination, faultless monsters, or awkward fine gentlemen. This appears
to

P R E F A C E.

to be the general distinction between the French novels and our own. If particulars may claim an exception to this general remark, *The Female Quixote* and *Henrietta*, I hope may lay some claim to that exception. But it is towards the French criticisms and translations that we must now turn our eyes.

Monfieur Brumoy, a jesuit, is esteemed one of the best critics in the fertile age of Lewis the Fourteenth. Monfieur Voltaire, speaking of the *Theatres de Grecs*, says, "that it passes for the best work of its kind:" "but," continues that author, "he has discovered by it, that it "is far easier to translate and point out the beauties of "the ancients than to equal our most celebrated moderns, by his own productions." Monfieur Voltaire's criticism is right; Brumoy is a good critic, and an excellent translator, but he is a bad and a tedious writer. His paragraphs are sometimes much too long; then again much too short. By ill-judged length and embarrassed brevity they are equally made obscure. His metaphors are always broken: his similes unjust, improper, and forced; sometimes they are low and disagreeable. The repetition of them is tedious; we are tired in seeing continually *pictures* and *buildings*, rising up to explain all things and every thing. He puts us in mind of a famous line in the Dunciad; "And writes about it, Goddess! and "about it." But he by no means deserves a niche in that temple of disgrace. He has deep critical learning: his criticisms often betray him into tautologies. It is to be wished he had been less critical, and more historical. Criticism sometimes rather retards than promotes the progress of learning. It often blasts the works of genius, gives them a deformity, which nature never meant to give; yet seldom produces any new birth of its own. Monfieur

Brumoy

Brumoy is rather to be praised than to be imitated. He is totally neglectful of grammar : perhaps he thought himself superior to it. Relatives, nominative cases, and conjunctions, are sometimes forgotten, often misplaced, and often confounded by him. This character answers at full length that which Monsieur Voltaire has given of him. Yet, with all his faults, and with all his offences against stile, manner, and perspicuity, he has exhibited a work, which is learned, entertaining, and useful. He has given us a very exact history of that monument of human vanity and magnificence, the Grecian theatre. He has made his countrymen intimately acquainted with the best plays of the Grecian dramatic poets. This laborious performance is prefaced by three critical discourses, which have drawn upon the author the bitter but just complaints of the English translator. They contain the faults already mentioned. Let us consider each of them in a separate manner.

Monsieur Brumoy begins his first discourse upon the Grecian theatre, by giving very just reasons why the Greek language, and consequently the knowledge of the Grecian theatre, has been much neglected. He owns the partial worship which the French pay to their two dramatic stars, Corneille and Racine, and he laments the state of oblivion in which Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have remained. Eschylus, as our author too often repeats, was the undoubted father of tragedy ; and Homer was the model upon which he formed his plans. Monsieur Brumoy having in his third discourse composed some very succinct and clear memoirs of the three chief Grecian poets, when I offer my own thoughts upon that discourse, I shall then give a catalogue of the plays of each

each poet, and I shall translate the short account which our author inserts of the subject of each play. Monsieur Brumoy has not translated any one entire tragedy of Eschylus. He quotes Monsieur le Fevre to justify his opinion, that such an attempt, if not impossible, would be very disadvantageous to the Greek original. The old Grecian customs and manners are widely different from the fashion and practices of later ages. We are disgusted at the gross and unseemly orations of Æschines and Demosthenes, and we are amazed to find in Homer a scolding Juno, a brawling Therfites, a blustering Ajax, and an abusive Agamemnon. The ideas of dignity and decorum, which we constantly affix to Gods and Heroes, make all offences against those ideas appear inelegant and intolerable. Eschylus must have excited aversion rather than admiration, if he had been fully translated. Monsieur Brumoy gives his reasons, why he has chosen to translate out of Sophocles and Euripides some particular plays, and has abbreviated and given the general substance of others: he has fortified these reasons by an explanation that is satisfactory and undeniable. He assures us, that he has avoided every extreme to which too vague or too close translations are liable. All that he has advanced upon this point will be found true, and his readers will perceive, that he has had sufficient skill to sail happily between Scylla and Charybdis.

He goes on to tell us, he has divided his whole work into three parts. He particularizes and gives the substance of each part. But here I cannot avoid observing, that he weakens and interrupts the strength of his account by a triple simile of *melting manna*, a *vanishing phantom*, and a *fading flower*. Such is the effect of Gallic liveliness.

ness. A gaudy butterfly seldom fails to carry away the gravest French philosopher. Excuse Monsieur Brumoy some native lightnesses, and his first discourse will be found filled with good sense, profound criticism, and true judgment.

The second discourse begins with the original of tragedy. The account of the Chinese tragedy is curious: the deduction of the Grecian tragedy from its first original, an hymn to Bacchus, to its latest excellence, is carried on with great exactness and perspicuity. Monsieur Brumoy is fully of opinion, that the form of the Grecian tragedy is taken from the plan of the Iliad and Odyssey. He attributes every thing to Homer. His supposition may be just. If it is not, who can wish to contradict it? In his Homeric raptures he gives a soliloquy to that part which is neither entertaining nor instructive. He introduces it confusedly, and is far from pursuing or ending it clearly. He runs into the same error, and makes a soliloquy for Eschylus. A Frenchman speaking and thinking for a Grecian must appear almost as distant from the true Grecian thoughts and expressions, as Greece is from France. The attempt is absurd, not to say ridiculous. Look upon it in the light of criticism, it may be tolerable. The manner displeases, the matter is worthy of observation.

Monsieur Brumoy then proceeds to discuss the various passions raised by tragedy. His propositions are most of them undeniable. He points out the true effect of tragedy. He gives the cause of that effect. But he suddenly returns to Homer and Eschylus, and quits a fair open road of reasoning, to enter into trifling and needless arguments, concluding the whole by a prosaical, poetical representation of the epic and tragic muse.

After

After having touched upon the qualities of tragedy, our author goes on to consider the length of time which tragedy ought to employ. His opinion, although not so clearly expressed as might be wished, is the same as has been pursued by all the best dramatic writers, except Shakespear. Our immortal Shakespear has committed the highest offences against chronology, history, politics, and every shadow of probability: he has broke through the unities of action, time, and place: he has confined himself to no dramatic rules, by which unbounded licence he has not given us, if the blasphemy against him may be excused, any one complete play. He has indeed done more. He has exhibited certain strokes of nature, that must have been entirely lost, or miserably lopped and maimed, had he submitted to wear those shackles with which neither Eschylus himself, nor any of his successors, thought it a pain or a disgrace to be loaded.

I forget the name of the French author who says, that the English are Shakespear mad. There are some grounds for the assertion. We are methodists in regard to Shakespear. We carry our enthusiasms so far, that we entirely suspend our senses towards his absurdities and his blunders. We behold with a calmness, proceeding from a boundless piety, *a ghost returning more than once from that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns*: and we as devoutly view, *Desdemona stifled to death, then so perfectly restored to life as to speak two or three sentences, then die again without another oppressive stroke from the pillow*. How great must be the merit of an author who remains, and most assuredly ever will remain, triumphant and supreme,

with all his imperfections on his head? Those merits arise from a strict and constant conformity to nature, whose laws Shakespear most happily followed, however he may have neglected the regularity of the drama. He is from thence become a strong instance how far superior nature is to art, since our best, our most correct, our most applauded dramatic writers appear stiff, constrained, and void of force, when compared with his native fire and exuberance of imagination.

The criticisms which Monsieur Brumoy continues upon the various parts of tragedy, must appear much to his honour, were they not interrupted by some awkward similies, an ill-told story of Columbus and his egg, and a broken metaphor of a fine country-seat.

Monsieur Brumoy touches upon the modern introduction of confidents, those friends in tragedy to whom the chief personages discover their secrets and situation. The discovery, indeed, is purposely made to the audience, and supplies the want of a Chorus. But if Homer, in his epic poem, found a Patroclus necessary to Achilles, and Virgil an Achates to Æneas, such examples may well justify the dramatic poets in calling in the assistance of associates, who generally appear of more use than ornament to the piece. To speak in Monsieur Brumoy's own style, they are the mortar which forms a proper cement to fix the corner-stones of the building.

The history of the Chorusses, after a most just critique displayed upon all the other parts of the ancient tragedy, is given by Monsieur Brumoy in a learned, diffusive, and masterly manner. Every reader will find pleasure and satisfaction in that part of our author's discourse.

discourse. But the more exact the history, the more absurd must the Chorus appear. It consisted of a groupe of people, first of fifty, afterwards of fifteen, to whom were entrusted the deepest secrets, the closest conspiracies, the most private distress, and every material part of the drama. The different orders, who constituted the Chorus, were innumerable: sometimes it was composed of Furies, sometimes of priests, sometimes of citizens, and sometimes of matrons, nymphs, old men, or shepherds. The Choryphæus entered at the head of the troop, and often made answers for the rest. The answers too were frequently returned in songs by the whole Chorus together. Could the least degree of the probable, for which our author so justly contends, be preserved in such a composition? Is it possible to imagine, that fifty, or even fifteen people can keep a secret, which, as the enigmatical proverb says, is too much for one, too little for three, and only fit for two? Delusion may compel us to imagine ourselves at Athens, or at Thebes, it may conjure up ghosts and goblins to our eyes, and may even transport us into the Elysiac fields; but no delusion can ever render us sufficiently enchanted to suppose fifteen people capable of keeping a secret, and, which is still as extraordinary, fifteen people of the same mind, thought, voice, and expression. Yet, this is the jury, without whose verdict the laws of the ancient drama cannot be put in force. Monsieur Brumoy laments the loss of the Chorus. He gives his reasons: it would be wrong to anticipate what he says upon the point. The historical part of the Chorus may prove instructive; but the reasons, in defence of the Chorus, must fall to the ground.

The remainder of the second discourse is taken up in criticisms on the manners and the diction of the ancient dramas: among the criticisms will be found a descriptive account of the theatres, of the dresses, of the actors, and of the ornaments of the stage. Subjects that cannot be unacceptable or tiresome to the curious.

The third discourse, a parallel between the ancient and modern theatres, begins by a confused kind of introduction, which leads to a general view of the Athenian government; in the description of which Monsieur Brumoy is perfectly clear and instructive. He gives an accurate account of the monarchical and archontical state. Upon every remarkable action he employs a note that ascertains the exact time in which the event happened. He traces out the progress of the Athenian glory. He shews the rise of arts and sciences, and, in his narration, intermingles the history of the theatre, and of the dramatic poets. He delineates the character of the Athenian people, and from thence most judiciously deduces the character of the Grecian plays. He proceeds from Attica to Sparta. He paints the Lacedæmonians in a proper and just attitude. Their virtues were singularly great, their customs and their laws were remarkably particular. They educated their virgins in the same athletic exercises of hunting, dancing, and riding, as their young men. Whoever had declared his intention to marry, was led into a dark room where the virgins were assembled, and the first of whom he took hold, was absolutely destined for his wife. So strange and so extraordinary a custom appears rather whimsical than wise, rather imperious

imperious than politic. The wisdom of the government consisted in breeding up the people to an adoration of virtue, and an abhorrence of vice. Slaves were made drunk, and exposed publicly, that drunkenness might appear odious to the beholders. The Athenians encouraged every branch of art and science: the Spartans even banished theatrical entertainments. Plutarch, in his dissertation on the laws and customs of the Lacedæmonians, says, " Among the Lacedæmonians all
" vain and insignificant employments, such as regarded
" only curiosity and pleasure, were strictly prohibited,
" as things that would make them degenerate into
" idleness and covetousness; would render them vain
" and effeminate, useless to themselves and unservice-
" able to the state: and on this account it was, that
" they would never suffer any scenes, or interludes
" whatever, of comedy or tragedy, to be set up among
" them, lest also there should be any encouragement
" given to speak or act any thing that might favour of
" contempt or contumely against the laws and govern-
" ment; it being customary for the stage to assume
" an indecent liberty of taxing the one with faults, and
" the other with imperfections."

From Sparta our author goes into Bœotia, and lightly touches upon the manners and government of the Thebans. The remarks made by him upon these chief parts of Greece, will be found much to his honour. He leaves nothing material unsaid in the personal characters which he gives of Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. I shall, therefore, only mention the tragedies of each of these authors, and translate from him the prefatory account which he exhibits of each play.

1. *Prometheus*

1. *Prometheus upon mount Caucasus*; a tragedy written by Eschylus.

This is the most ancient of the Grecian dramatic subjects which remain to us. Prometheus, an Egyptian, and brother of Atlas (fables have disguised the character of each), flourished in the time of Joshua, and of Cecrops, the first king of Athens.

2. *The Suppliants, or, The Danaides*; by Eschylus.

About a year after Prometheus. The fifty daughters of Danaïs refusing to marry the sons of Egyptus, their cousin-germans, took refuge in Argos, where they found an asylum against their persecutors.

3. *Ion*; a tragedy by Euripides.

One hundred years after the death of the Danaides. Xuthus, king of Athens, having gone to Delphos with his wife Creusa, to ask from the oracle an heir to his throne, Apollo gave him Ion, the son of that God by Creusa, before she had married Xuthus.

4. *Medea*; a tragedy by Euripides.

About the same time Medea, abandoned by Jason, kills her rival, and retires to Athens, where she married Egeus, ninth king of Athens.

5. *Hippolytus*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Theseus, the son of Egeus, delivers up his own son Hippolytus to all the fury of Neptune, upon a false deposition made against him by Phædra his step-mother, who killed herself, after having left a letter in which she accused Hippolytus of having attempted to violate the honour of his father's nuptial bed.

6. *Alcestes*;

6. *Alcestes* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

Hercules flourished at the same time with Theseus. One of his first exploits was to draw back and deliver Alcestes from death and her tomb : she had sacrificed herself for her husband Admetus, king of Phœæ in Thessaly.

7. *Hercules mad* ; a tragedy of Euripides.

Hercules returning from hell to Thebes, killed, in the delirium of a frenzy, his own children, and was conducted by Theseus to Athens.

8. *The Trachinians* ; a tragedy by Sophocles.

The death of Hercules is occasioned by a mistake of his wife Dejanira, who, having sent him a robe tinged with the blood of the Centaur Nessus, knew not the effect of her present.

The three tragedies, which regard Hercules, are, as we perceive, cotemporaries as to the subject.

9. *King Oedipus* ; a tragedy by Sophocles.

Oedipus knowing himself guilty of incest and parricide, tears out his own eyes.

10. *Oedipus at Colona* ; a tragedy by Sophocles.

Oedipus having been banished from Thebes by his own children Eteocles and Polynices, arrives at Colona, an Athenian town, reiterates his terrible imprecations against his children, who contested with each other for the crown ; their father dies in the place (Colona) which he had chosen for an asylum.

11. *The*

11. *The seven chiefs at the siege of Thebes* ; a tragedy by Eschylus.

Polynices draws after him an army of Argives, commanded by seven generals, of whom he was one. After an obstinate siege, the two brothers (Polynices and Eteocles) fight hand to hand, and kill each other.

12. *The Phœnicians* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

This subject is partly the same with the *Seven Chiefs*. Polynices and Eteocles reciprocally kill each other. Creon, brother of Jocasta, takes the crown. Euripides supposes Jocasta still alive during this revolution, while Sophocles, in his *King Oedipus*, supposes Jocasta to kill herself, after having discovered that her son was her husband. Again, Oedipus is banished by Sophocles (in his *Oedipus at Colona*) before the combat of his two sons : but Euripides does not represent him as exiled till after the combat. Many other differences may be found, which evidently shew that the fabulous traditions, though equally received, were very different.

13. *Antigone* ; a tragedy by Sophocles.

Antigone, sister of Polynices and Eteocles, gives many instances of the greatest kindness to her elder brother, against the positive inhibition of Creon, who orders her to be buried alive.

14. *The Suppliants*, or, *The Argives* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

The Argives, drawn by Polynices to the siege of Thebes, had been defeated and very ill used by the Thebans. The widows and relations of those who had been killed go to Athens with Adrastus their king, with
a view

a view of engaging Theseus to force Creon, king of Thebes, who had cruelly denied burial to the dead, to allow them sepulture.

Oedipus and his family are the subject of six tragedies.

15. *Iphigenia at Aulis*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Within some few years after the events already mentioned, succeeded the Trojan war. Twelve hundred Grecian ships prepare to set sail: they are detained in the port of Aulis. Agamemnon, to obtain favourable winds, sacrifices his daughter.

16. *Rhesus*; a tragedy by Euripides.

In the tenth year of the siege of Troy. Rhesus arrives at the Trojan camp, and is there killed by Diomedes and Ulysses, who carry away his horses.

17. *Ajax distracted*; a tragedy by Sophocles.

In the same year Achilles returns to the battle and dies*. Ajax and Ulysses contest together for his arms. They are adjudged to Ulysses: Ajax, upon the occasion, becomes furious to a degree of frenzy, and kills himself.

18. *Philoctetes*; a tragedy by Sophocles.

The Grecians, in obedience to an oracle, have recourse to Philoctetes, whom they conduct from Lemnos

* Achilles did not die in battle as by Monsieur Brumoy's manner of expression might be supposed. He was killed at Troy by Paris, in the temple of Apollo, while the nuptial ceremony between him and Polyxena was preparing.

to the siege of Troy, with the arrows of Hercules ; arrows upon which the fate of the city depended.

19. *The Trojans* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

Troy being taken, Aftyanox sacrificed, and lots drawn for the Trojan women, the Greeks prepare to return back to their country.

20. *Hecuba* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

The Greeks arrive in the Chersonesus of Thrace. They there immolate Polyxena to the manes of Achilles. Polymnestor, king of the country, had killed Polydorus ; Hecuba, mother of Polydorus and Polyxena, revenges herself upon the barbarous king Polymnestor.

21. *The Cyclop* ; a satyrical entertainment by Euripides.

Ulysses arrives in the country of the Cyclops. He puts out the eye of Polyphema, and escapes himself with his companions.

22. *The Heraclides* ; a tragedy by Euripides.

About the same time the children * of Hercules, assisted by the Athenians, take their enemy Eurysthus in battle, and revenge themselves on him.

23. *Agamemnon* ; a tragedy by Eschylus.

Agamemnon, returning from Troy to Mycene, is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra.

* Hercules had several wives, and a great number of children.

24. *The Coephores*; a tragedy by Eschylus.

25. *Electra*; a tragedy by Sophocles.

26. *Electra*; a tragedy by Euripides.

These three subjects, with some little difference, are the same thing. Orestes, son of Agamemnon, revenges the death of his father by killing his mother.

27. *Orestes*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Is the sequel of the same subject. Orestes is condemned by the Argives. He takes refuge in Athens.

28. *The Eumenides*; a tragedy by Eschylus.

Orestes having been pursued by the Furies, is acquitted at Athens.

29. *Andromache*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Peleus delivers Andromache from the Fury of Hermione. Orestes marries Andromache.

30. *Iphigenia at Tauris*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Orestes goes into Tauris. He there knows again his sister Iphigenia, and carries her back into Greece, with the statue of Diana.

31. *Helen*; a tragedy by Euripides.

Menelaus returning from Troy, is thrown by a tempest into Egypt. There he finds the true Helen, and returns with her to Sparta.

The war of Troy and its consequences furnish out seventeen tragedies.

32. *The Persians* ; a tragedy by Eschylus.

Six hundred years, or thereabouts, after the return of the Greeks, Xerxes, king of Persia, quitted Greece, after the demolition of his fleet in the naval combat of Salamina.

This is the list which Monsieur Brumoy gives us of the Grecian tragedies. He has arranged them according to the order of their historical subjects : some of which have been adapted to the French theatre, and have appeared to great advantage. Of these Monsieur Brumoy, throughout his work, takes particular notice, and gives such an account as must afford some degree of instruction almost to every reader.

Our author then proceeds to begin his *parallel* between the ancient and the modern theatre, which, by degrees, he draws up and concludes in a masterly manner ; but even in this, and in every other part of his own writings, those blemishes that I have already mentioned, of affected similes, repeated comparisons, and laborious allusions, appear too frequently : so that, upon the whole, his merits, which are great and capacious, must protect and shield him against the sharp edge of the critic's sword ; for, look upon him as a man of deep literature, and as an unwearied traveller through the most opaque regions of antiquity, we shall not often see his like again.

It is not possible to have gone through the Grecian theatre, and to have considered attentively Monsieur Brumoy's three discourses, without making frequent reflections upon the present state of our own stage. From all writings whatever, we may observe that human

man nature constantly brings some parallel to her own home. Brumoy's parallel between the ancient theatres and that of France is an instance that verifies the assertion. May I be permitted, therefore, to take a retrospect, and with it a present view of our English stage.

No theatre in the world ever equalled England in the multiplicity of subjects, and the various forms in which those subjects have been adapted to the stage. To say the truth, I believe no people in the world were ever so voraciously fond of theatrical entertainments: our appetite is without bounds, and our digestion is so very quick, that we can, with equal eagerness and pleasure, swallow down the most ridiculous sing-song farce, or the most absurd pantomime, immediately after we have been fed and feasted with the most exquisite delicacies of Shakespear and Otway. Agreeable to such a keenness of appetite, the English poets have always thought themselves obliged to slaughter and cut up every story that came in their way, being well assured, that as soon as the meat was exposed in the theatrical shambles, it would be eagerly bought up, and ravenously devoured. Accordingly we find no less than twelve volumes of *select* old plays appearing lately in print, by the encouragement of a very numerous and honourable set of subscribers. Before those plays is an useful instructive preface that gives us an historical account of the rise and progress of the English theatre; and the editor very ingeniously confesses, that he has exhibited the collection not as good, but curious; a greater curiosity could not appear as a sample of the primitive dramatic taste. By what degrees and in what manner
that

that taste has been improved, is a point that I would willingly discuss.

The latter end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century were honoured with the writings of those great cotemporaries Shakespear, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Johnson. Their works are too well known to need a single line of delineation. But by whom were such choice spirits succeeded? By numerous and nameless authors. The ancient dramatic barbarism revived, and revived with double force of ribaldry and absurdities. The age loved nonsense, grave, formal, canting nonsense; so that William Prynne, esq; by outdoing dramatical nonsense, established his own. Prynne was pilloried, but the theatres were demolished. Prynne lost his ears, but the poets lost their bread. It was a filthy and wicked abomination to name Shakespear, but to quote him was *like the bleating of brute beasts, yea, it were downright blasphemy*. Thus was chaos come again, and universal darkness reigned over the stage, till the restoration of Charles the Second.

In the train of the gay young monarch came the muses, the graces, and the loves; wit overflowed like the Nile, leaving much mud behind it, but with this difference, that such mud never produced crops of corn, but spoiled and polluted the land upon which it had spread itself. The muses, instead of nine, appear to have been nine thousand. Poetical inspiration attended almost upon every pen and ink: each succeeding week produced a play, each day a poem, and each hour teemed with instances of that pert vivacity with which false taste abounds. The king himself, with very lively parts, wanted all solidity of judgment. His taste had been

been vitiated in France. He encouraged and approved of plays in rhyme; the most unnatural composition that ever entered into the human mind. But his royal presence, and that lively good humour which constantly attended all his actions, never failed to crowd the theatre in such a manner, that the poets of that age not only procured victuals to themselves and family, but, what they liked better, drink also. If Dryden was poor, it was his own fault; Johnny Crowne was not: and if we consider Tom Southren only as a dramatic poet, he died in affluence of fortune. Many of the nobility wrote for the benefit and encouragement of the stage. The Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, though temporary, flourishes and brings crowded audiences at this day. The *Committee*, notwithstanding the low, absurd character of Teague, yet by exposing the manners of the puritans and anabaptists, is tolerable, after having been written probably over a bottle, near an hundred years ago. Sir George Ethridge's plays still appear genteel; but, upon the whole, the dramatic taste of Charles the Second's reign is faulty, and often intolerable. James the Second did not amend it. Queen Mary, who had an admirable understanding, a noble nature, and an active judgment, was, by her untimely death, the greatest loss that the stage could sustain. The drama run again into ribaldry, and low wit; and although it has ebbed and flowed ever since betwixt order and disorder, decency and licentiousness, true wit and false, yet in its best and most perfect days, which I look upon to be the present, there is room for great, very great amendment.

Our

Our chief want is genteel, *sensible*, modern comedy. How easily, at one thought, can we summon up every comedy of that kind which we have? The *Conscious Lovers* stands first in the list, the *Provoked Husband* next, the *Suspicious Husband* is the third, and, if it must be allowed for the sake of its language, the *Careless Husband* concludes the list. Most, if not all, of our other comedies are indelicate to a degree that reflects shame rather than honour on our nation. Let the booths of Bartholomew-fair abound with low wit, trite jests, and vulgar thoughts; but let the regular, the royal theatres be patterns of delicacy, elegance, and ease. Comedy is a mirror in which the prevailing characters of the age are represented to the view. It may be considered as an expressive historical picture of the manners of the times, and becomes as valuable from the just resemblance, as from the colouring.

The Italians have begun to reform their comedy. Harlequin and his buffoonry appear but seldom in the scene; yet so long has that nation been accustomed to the wooden sword and patched coat, that it is not without some difficulty any new piece can be introduced upon the stage, when that zany and his nonsense are totally extirpated.

The French outdo us in the comic art, which should oftner make us smile than laugh; and perhaps sometimes should melt us into tears, but they must be tears of joy and humanity, not of sorrow or regret. To justify what I have advanced, we need only to recollect the agreeable and tender emotion of our hearts in the discovery of Indiana. We feel for her, for Danvers, and for Bevil all those sensations, which we
would

would wish to feel on the like happy occasion for ourselves.

From reflexions of this kind, I am led to think, that the comedy for this age, (which, with all its faults, is more decent, or at least less flagrantly indecent than its predecessors) might be much improved by being more of the serious and instructive kind, than by consisting of the wild unguarded wit, that rather neauseates than entertains. The scenes might be a fine contrast of wit, humour, sensibility, and instruction, and might rise

From grave to gay, from lively to severe.

Mirth must never be banished from comedy. The Toms and Phyllisses must have their parts; and the formal coxcomb will never fail to delight, when, like philosophic Cimberton, he is disappointed, or, like the gayer lord Foppington, he is ridiculed, and put out of countenance.

Our modern English writers have been apt to give their fine gentlemen their own turn and character, as much as they could. In *Sir Harry Wildair* we behold Farquhar: all Congreve's chief characters are devoted to Venus, and speak as loosely upon the stage as at a tavern: while Steele, who had more of the Christian hero, often strikes the heart with the strongest sentiments of virtue and morality.

Our farces, formed perhaps upon the plan of the French *petites pieces*, are most of them below all kind of animadversions. They are not worthy to be seen, to be read, or even to be thought of: yet it must be owned, that during this last season of acting, we have appeared willing to despise those wretched entertainments, and to prefer decency and decorum to *the devil in the wiser cellar*, and its numerous fraternity. The applause with which the *Guardian* was received is an example of our impro-

ving taste. The increase of that improvement will be much to the honour of the present century.

To enter far into a disquisition upon tragedy would be beyond the limits and intentions of this preface. Tragedy itself, that lesser epic poem, is one of these arduous undertakings in which few have excelled. In England the subject is frequently too much exalted, and the scenes are often laid too high: we deal almost solely in the fate of kings and princes, as if misfortunes were chiefly peculiar to the great. But our poets might consider, that we feel not so intensely the sorrows of the higher powers, as we feel the miseries of those who are nearer upon a level with ourselves. The revolution and fall of empire affect us less than the distresses of a private family. Homer for that reason preferred his *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*. He himself had wandered like *Ulysses*; and although by the force of imagination, he so nobly described the din of battle, and the echoing contests of fiery princes, yet his heart still sensibly felt the indigence of the wandering *Ithacan*, and the contemptuous treatment shewn to the beggar, whose soul and genius deserved a better fate. Whatever may have been chosen for the subject of tragedy, the English theatre has made itself too long remarkable for covering the stage with dead bodies, and exhibiting all the horror of murders and executions. By *Monfieur Brumoy*, we learn that the Grecian theatre was much more chaste; and *Horace*, among the rules in his art of poetry, particularly forbids such deaths as are unnatural to be represented on the stage.

But let not such upon the stage be brought,
Which better should behind the scenes be wrought;
Nor force th' unwilling audience to behold
What may with grace and elegance be told.

FRANCIS.

The

The French theatre has more exactly copied these rules. The error of the English has been owing to a more barbarous and more savage taste, which as it has ceased in the nation, should *now* disappear from the stage. In the Orphan, altho' a private scene of domestic distress is finely represented, *Monimia* and *Polydore* ought to have died; life was no longer to be enjoyed by them with the least degree of happiness. But why must *Castalio* perish? Or why must he be guilty of fratricide? He was sufficiently unfortunate before, and ought to have lived to comfort the old *Acasto*. Exaggerated distress leaves a melancholy impression upon the mind, and seldom excites those fine transient emotions that spring from compassion and generous humanity.

The authors of tragedy ought to be thoroughly versed in the rules of the theatrical drama; and to be well acquainted with the powers of the actors, especially of such upon whom the principal parts are to devolve. Many of our English authors have been remarkably deficient in this particular. The length of the speeches, and the continual torrent of passion from beginning to the end, have been too great and violent for the power of any actor whatever. Shakespear has evidently avoided this error. He always gives the actor a resting place. When Hamlet's powers are gradually raised to the highest pitch by seeing his father's ghost, the author relieves him, and gives him a time to breathe, by letting fall his voice most properly, to ask a few short pathetic questions. *Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?*

Most of Shakespear's important periods finely terminate within the compass of the actor's voice. Every high emotion never fails to have just pauses. When we add to

this, the beauty and strength of his sentiments, it is no surprize to find how few of his representations excel in the principal parts, and why those parts will always be the test and standard of the actor's genius, power, and taste.

This incomparable writer, incomparable both in his beauties and in his faults, never appeared in more true lustre than in the present age. *The Alfox*, with the same force and enthusiasm of imagination, enters into the sentiments of the author, and expresses what he feels with such a power, such a strength, and such an original spirit, that we sometimes almost forget the player in the poet. Thus have they mutually augmented each other's fame; and the statue which Mr. Garrick has raised to the poet, though fine in its kind, and an instance of a laudable and grateful manner of thinking, is but a weak representation of that real life which he constantly gives to the memory and writings of *his Shakespear*.

DISCOURSE

UPON THE THEATRE OF THE GREEKS.

I Cannot believe that I shall do the least injury to an age so polite, and in all other respects so enlightened as ours, by saying, that at the very same time when the taste for public theatrical entertainments* is so extremely refined by the great geniuses, whose works have produced that refinement, we have been, and still continue to be little acquainted with the Grecian theatre. To speak the truth, the few remains handed down to us of that theatre, do still afford great pleasure to some curious persons, who have not been deterred from studying the Grecian language. The number of them is very small, and such as they are, their taste is not equal to their erudition: as if those two points were seldom conjoined. The particular turn adopted by our French theatre, and the high degree of perfection to which it has been brought, leads us insensibly into an opinion, that any recourse to the ancients is useless. Dramatical works, and works of mere taste, have not the same effect upon us as other kind of pleasurable performances, in which whatever is ancient or foreign, is preferred to any thing of our own. As we enjoy the present times, where we find our morals exactly painted, we entertain such advantageous ideas of times now before us, that we totally neglect the knowledge of what is past, the study of which appears less interesting and more laborious. Thus it is impossible for us even to suspect any of the antient productions equal to Corneille and Racine.

The tragic
Greek poets
little known,
and why.

But it is not so with morality, eloquence, history, and poetry. The models in those sciences which have been left to us by the antients, have excited the curiosity of the French nation to a much higher degree. Xenophon, Cæsar, Livy, and Tacitus, have had a great effect in history. Homer, (attacked as he has been) Virgil and Horace are looked upon in morality and poetry as our fellow-citizens. But the fate of Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, has been different in tragedy. Those founders of the theatre have been the greatest sufferers in the war that still subsists among the ancients and the moderns. The merit of historians, orators, and poets, has forced itself through the clouds into open day: whilst the merit of the tragic writers has not been able to dissipate the darkness by which they are surrounded.

Again, the philosophic genius of Descartes, at this day spread throughout the whole appennage of the human judgment, has by little and little made us imagine, that we have treasures at home sufficiently valuable to allow our neglect of riches abroad, most especially when they are to be bought by very troublesome voyages. This same judgment, the certain friend of independence, by immediately overturning the antient philosophy, and then by making us supreme arbitrators of all arts and all sciences, without any regard to the weight of authority, inspires us with I know not what kind of disdain for every thing that does not come within the reach of our abilities. It is shorter and easier to esteem little, or even to despise what costs us too dear to know: and the ruins of the antient theatre appear too rude to purchase the single pleasure of taste, at the expence of pains, for which we should scarce think ourselves sufficiently recompensed.

Indeed the Latin comedy has preserved still a more considerable place in the public esteem. The excellent pieces of Moliere have not made us forget Plautus and Terence. We have indulgently considered those antients as authors of a kind of theatrical entertainment which has its particular merit, although the characters exhibited in it are very common, and almost always the same. As these comic poets are within the reach of the multitude, their reputation is maintained, and has been much less attacked than the repu-

reputation of the Grecian tragic poets. The latter have passed most imperceptibly from too high a prejudice in their favour to a kind of indifference, even more dangerous than contempt: so that there has been formed again another kind of prejudice, not so powerful, but at least very extensive, in banishing them by way of favour into libraries, or into the hands of those who are called blind adorers of antiquity. These pretended idolaters are themselves become more timid and reserved in lavishing their incense, and I doubt not but they have more than once denied in private what they have said in public, and have belied their outward worship by inward blasphemies. So seducing and contagious is example.

II. This kind of indifference has produced almost a general oblivion, which undeniably does more hurt to the Grecian poets than all the arrows that have been darted at them in a diversity of ages. My design is to draw them, at least in part, out of that darkness to which we seem to have condemned them, and to cite them afresh to a tribunal not of the few, but of the public, not to extort approbation in their favour or to deliver them from censure, but that they may be adjudged with some knowledge of the cause, without regard to favourable or unfavourable authorities, and with the true Cartesian spirit, as far as it may be applicable to things of mere taste.

The intent of
this work.

If authorities were to take place, I should make a very extensive preface of the praises, which, from age to age down to our own days, have been lavished upon the theatre of the Grecians; and I should scarce have less matter if I were to alledge what their enemies have writ against them, and against Homer, their model. But in point of taste there is no speaking of authorities either for or against. Every one judges, and it is just he should, for himself: nevertheless to direct our judgment, we have no business to compare the antients with the moderns, as we are almost always desirous of doing. Between two different kinds of writing, the comparison cannot be perfect nor the preference well decided. It is sufficient that we should instruct ourselves, and give our opinion

either on what is good or what is bad. Things are at least susceptible of various degrees; for altho' it be true what is said of poetry, 'That no degree can subsist between the middling and the worst*', it is also true, that poetical works may have their beauties, in a more or less elevated order, and may please by very different graces. Thus the theatre of the Corneilles and the Racines may, at the same time that they charm all understandings, leave room for the antients to deserve our applauses upon their beauties, without any prejudice to the criticisms on their real faults. But this is not the proper place to examine in what and how far we may compare the antient with the modern tragedies. I reserve for that article a particular discourse.

The source of the opinions against the Grecian tragedies, and the rules how to judge of those opinions rationally.

III. After having intimated my design and the reasons which induced me to it, I go on to consider the source of the judgments given for and against the poets of whom I am speaking, and what rule appears most eligible to follow, in order to avoid either adoration or contempt: for it is certain that to consider, as indeed in all writings we ought to do, the wide difference of judgments which have passed upon the Grecian poets, they are all reducible to those two extremes. In effect there are two sorts of people who look upon the Grecian theatre with very different eyes. One set speaks of it as the height of perfection to which human wit could ever attain. If you attend to the others, they say it is only the infancy and lisping of tragedy; and what is singular enough, both these combatants fight with the same arms, cite in their own favour, taste in concert with reason, and reproach each other mutually with a slavish submission to authority and prevention.

If we were to take authority for a judge, we might soon enter an action against the too great severity of the modern critics, at the same time that the too outrageous admirers could not be able to boast of having gained an entire victory: for the Aristotles, the Ciceros, the Virgils, and the Quinctilians, by their determination would silence the malignity of the former, without authorising the superstitious culture of the latter. And to say the truth, it is very diffi-

* Boileau's Art of Poetry.

THE GREEK THEATRE.

v

cult not to give some weight to commendations, so clear, so moderate, and always so uniform towards the glory of the Grecian poets. Those judges have been competent and disinterested. They did not foresee that they should one day be contradicted, and their judgment be so far degraded as to have an appeal laid against it to good sense, upon points which were more known and more familiar to them than they can possibly be to us. But again, what need of consulting them, when we can form a judgment from our own understandings?

As to prejudice on the one side or on the other, it is easy to unveil and to confound it: nor does it scarce ever fail to betray itself. Esteem to an excess, contempt without bounds, conceited opinion, partiality, interest of a commentator or a friend, ideas sprung from education, and fortified by custom, a desire to extol the dead at the expence of the living, or to prejudice the former in favour of the latter, singularity in the manner of considering things: These are almost always the marks of that prejudice which characterises the writings of those partisans who idolize either the modern or the antient authors. But in short, even prejudice itself, be it blind, or be it clear-sighted, may be in the right in some things, though not in all: and pretended reason, if I may make use of the expression, may be in the wrong. Do not we see every day that Falsehood in the hands of a man of wit takes upon her the appearance of Truth? Besides, the most common effect of literary as well as other disputes, is only a confirmation of the two parties in their first opinion, especially in matters of taste: wherein the chief point consists in conveying sentiments rather than ideas to other people. At least, is not prejudice, be it well or ill founded in favour of the antient tragedies, totally destroyed? perhaps the state of those tragedies and of antiquity in general may be the same as the state of France, which a man of wit, comparing to religion, said, 'had been often well attacked, sometimes ill defended, and always triumphant.' It is very true therefore, that we shall gain but little, when we shall have accused, or even shall have convicted the partisans of the antients and the moderns of being prejudiced. But we should gain still less, and there would be no longer any fixed rule, if taste and
reason,

reason, both which are alledged as proofs, were variable according to places, times, and persons: if what pleased some might as justly displease others, and if all things were arbitrary in point of style, thoughts, turns, and works of wit: for it must follow, that each person yielding to his own manner of judging and thinking, must think and judge right, always guided by contrary ideas, and by very opposite sentiments. But things go not on in that manner, and whatever can be alledged, truth and beauty are one. They ought therefore to make the same impressions upon all understandings which have not been spoiled by science. Is it then in science only that nature ceases to be uniform? every fine and true thought, every sentiment that passes for sublime in one country and in one age, are the same throughout every country and all times. Such is the *Qu'il morût* [let him have died] of Corneille. Nor can it be said, that thoughts, sentiments, and explanatory turns are like modes and manners, subject to change in different climates, and by the revolution of years. Let us separate truth and beauty from the circumstances that education adds to them; and from those very circumstances let us not only draw a plausible reason for the several contradictory judgments, either apparent or real, that are passed upon the antients, but also a rule of precaution which we ought to follow in reading their works.

In fact, I understand by truth and beauty such productions of wit as tragedies are. An imitation of nature which seizes the soul, and which make us declare, according to the ideas received in a polished nation, 'That is true, That is beautiful.' I say again, an imitation of nature according to the ideas received in a nation where politeness reigns, because as far as nature is uniform in what belongs to men as men, in the exertion of the passions by example, so far education varies the interests that move those passions, and the manners of thinking and of acting. Now art ought to paint nature such as she finds her: I mean with all the appendixes of humanity and education.

To explain my thought, let me apply it to the tragedy of *Alceste*, which has been one the least spared of any in our days. If Euripides in this work paints well to me nature; if he calls up
my

my sensibility in the tenderness of a wife who dies voluntarily for her husband; if he deceives me by much art without letting that art appear; if he lays before me one great action that appears entirely one, is simple, uninterrupted, probable, and to that end limited to one place and a determined time; if he makes me follow the thread of a passion well conducted and well sustained, which as it goes is always encreasing, till the impression made becomes perfect; if in my turn, by an effort of imagination which I owe to him, I transport myself to the theatre of Athens to see the performance of his actors, and fall in with the whole entertainment*, without remembering that I am reading, for tragedy is not made to be read; she is all action; in a word, if *Alcestes* contains the principal conditions which good sense requires in a poem of that nature, and if I become an Athenian as much as those whom the poet intended to entertain, I cannot avoid, notwithstanding some faults which the pit† and I perceive, to join my applauses to the acclamations of the Grecian assembly, because, as the Greeks were men, so am I of the same species, and consequently struck with the same truths and the same beauties that have made so lively an impression upon their understandings.

But, on the other hand, if without paying any regard to the beauties of Euripides, which must strike universally, I appear as a Frenchman shocked at once with his customs and his manners, and as a person alienated from him by the intervention of many ages, I cry out immediately, ‘What signifies this god, the slave of a man? this infernal deity‡ who comes to ravish his prey? this crowd of subjects who always environ their sovereign? this kind of law or decorum authorised by Apollo, who ordains that the older should die for the younger, the father for the son? What is this! a son loses all respect towards his father, because the father will not subscribe to this law? What means this act of religion, which renders the duties of hospitality sacred, notwithstanding the embarrassment of a mourning and the justest grief? What have we to do with the contrast of this hero|| sitting at a feast, whilst the

* Le Spectacle.

† Le Parterre.

‡ Death.

|| Hercules.

* funeral

' funeral of Alcestes is performing? Is it judicious that Hercules wrestles with death and snatches from him his victim? or that Alcestes is raised from the dead, and remains dumb afterwards for three days? What is the meaning of all this?'---in a word, if like a Chinese who should find himself on a sudden at a Turkish ceremony, I assert every thing to be ridiculous, not to make use of the more energetic expression of Monsieur Perrault and his partisans, would not the Grecian spectators have a right to laugh themselves at my astonishment, and to say, 'What sort of ideas are yours? From what world come, you? What do you perceive in all this so strange? And what do you see upon the theatre that you do not see over and over in Athens?' They would be in the right, and perhaps I should not be in the wrong: for after all, ridicule springs as it were necessarily from an idea new, extraordinary, and odd, which we either join, or we find joined to a serious object.

But suppose also, that Euripides in his turn, comes from the other world, and that he is present at the representation of Monsieur Racine's Iphigenia, not to speak of other theatrical performances: he would certainly be charmed to become acquainted with himself again; and to see himself embellished, or, if you please, surpassed. These are the beauties of all eyes and of all countries. But suppose him little informed of our manners, little instructed in them, or having no regard for them? What would he say? I do not speak of the Episode of Eriphela; a kind of duplicity of action unknown to the Greeks, but of the French gallantry of Achilles, much more unknown to them. What would he say of the duel, to which the menaces of that hero tend; a thing too much authorised among us, and according to the Grecian disposition, looked upon as a folly? What would he say to the conversations that pass only between a prince and a princess? Would he not startle at seeing Clytemnestra at the feet of Achilles, who lifts her up? and at a thousand other things either relative to our customs, which appear to us more polite, or regarding our elegance, which according to us is more delicate, or our maxims of conduct, which we judge to be more refined than those of antiquity.

There is no question to be pronounced between the antients and us, upon the preference of manners, of customs, I had almost said, of moral virtues. I mean, that were those things placed in a balance, by an equitable and disinterested judge, we might be assured of carrying the day. Thus far is certain, that in the works of the Grecians, we ought no more to be offended at the representation of their manners, their customs, and their virtues (odd indeed, if you please), than the Greeks themselves were at the reality: or, at least, we ought to forgive their tragic poets for having imitated nature, such as they saw her in their own times, if we wish to have posterity pay the same regard to us. In short, in point of equity, we should place ourselves, if possible, in the point of view which those authors would have placed us in representing their tragedies. Such a piece of justice is never refused to painting, which is an imitation of nature for the eyes, as poetry is for the understanding. Without doubt, what I propose is not very easy to be done: nor is it less certain, that notwithstanding all the efforts we can make, these geniuses, so admired in their own times, and the ages immediately following, must lose a great deal. The loss may proceed either from the imperfection of their own age, more unwrought, perhaps, than ours, in what is accessory to nature; or by the difficulty we have to send ourselves into a distant country in their favour; or from the concurrence of both these circumstances which act together, and in defiance of ourselves: so much do we naturally yield to the imperceptible prejudices of education, at the same time that we refuse all bias from authority. Nevertheless, education, upon a near examination, will be found much more unjust than authority; for the latter establishes itself upon legal witnesses, against whom we cannot except, while the former has no other support than custom, which is very liable to instability. Hence comes the diversity of judgments upon the Grecian poets, whom we are determined not to consider in themselves, but, on the contrary, are resolved to measure according to the level of our own age, and its manners. A foreigner might as well be tried by the French Code,

But I do not pretend to justify the antient, not even the tragic authors, in all things: nor to deny their true faults, provided that

those faults are shewn to be totally independent of the difference of ages. I still much less pretend to prefer them to those illustrious moderns, who have made so many new draughts upon sometimes their almost imperceptible sketches. The only point I have in view, is to save from ridicule certain passages, that must lessen and wound the delicacy of Athens, and of Rome the admirer of Athens, in case that those passages do in themselves carry a real ridicule, founded upon the received opinion that has been formed of them.

From all I have said, I conclude, first, that the poets in question are very little known, and that many reasons have concurred to neglect, or even to despise them. Secondly, that they nevertheless deserve a different fate, and that perhaps I have been of some service, in submitting them, as far as I have been able, to the judgment of the public, or, at least, in reviving a desire of being acquainted with them. Thirdly, that no judgments against them which have run into extremities ought to be regarded. Fourthly, that the source of those judgments is, the difficulty which we find in transporting ourselves into the time and place where and when the authors have written, in order to admire or criticise nothing without a reasonable foundation. Fifthly, that a precaution of that kind is necessary, that we may place ourselves in a situation to judge with some degree of equity.

The plan
and execu-
tion of this
book.

IV. I ought now to give an account of my work. The Grecian theatre placed before the French nation in such a light, as to render every body capable of judging of it with certainty, has appeared to me a work of taste hitherto wanting in the republic of letters. Four or five plays, be they tragedies or comedies, given to us separately by persons of literature, did not answer the defect: To form an exact and complete idea of the ancient theatre, all the rest of the plays were necessarily to be collected. The collection to follow in due order. The works of the several poets were to be compared with themselves, and compared again with their rivals: their characters and their genius to be formed from such a comparison. General and particular passages, especially the nicest, were to be remarked with justness. All was to be re-united, confront-

ed, matched, and the several parts to be put together, so as to form one whole. The chaos to be so dissipated, as to draw from it one living and animated body; in a word, to rebuild the antient theatre from its own ruins. This is what I dare not say I have absolutely done; but at least I have tried to do it: happy, if the success of the execution answers in some measure the importance of the enterprize, and the painful application during as many years as Horace prescribes for all works of consequence that are to be produced into day-light.

I have divided my work into three parts.

In the first part, as I write less for men of learning by profession, than for the more numerous men of wit (I mean the public, whom it is necessary to put into the right road) I have thought it my duty to begin by preliminary discourses, such as this, of which the intent is to convince the reader, that, while we are travelling in the countries of Antiquity, we must walk with great precaution, when a determination is to be pronounced upon works of taste. If there are rules to explain them, there are rules also to judge of them. In a pursuit merely of erudition we trust to the report of the traveller, provided his embellishments are warranted by no improbable assertions. But if a relater of facts seems to be willing to make a country through which he passed perfectly fine, we are neither to believe him upon his own word, nor upon the authorities which he alledges. He ought even to mistrust himself, in order to render his suggestions just. I presume to affirm, that this has been my manner of thinking. The same manner of thinking ought in proportion to belong to every reader, who wishes to form his judgment. He must, in certain points, agree with the traveller who represents those points.

It has appeared to me necessary, in order to enlighten more and more the idea which we ought to form of the Grecian tragedies, that we should take them from their original; that we should demonstrate their improvement; and that we should walk step by step upon the ancient tracts of human wit, perhaps in a more steady manner than has ever yet been done. The public will judge of this particular by my second discourse; but as the lawful preju-

dice we maintain in favour of our own theatre, is one of the great means that biass us against the antient theatre; it has been necessary, in a third discourse, to shew the extent and limits of the comparison between the modern and antient theatres, to establish the principles of each, to draw conclusions from those principles, and from the different ages and different geniuses of the poets, and of the spectators, to found the parallel.

After this triple preface, drawn out to prepare, not to impose upon the judges, I have ventured to translate seven tragedies. Three of which are of *Sophocles*, and four of *Euripides*. It will easily be perceived, why I have not translated any one entire piece of *Eschylus*. That father of tragedy has been worse used by time than the other two. Besides, his extreme simplicity, joined to his faults, might have disgusted such readers as have been biassed either too much or too little in his favour. Lastly, such is the boldness of his epithets, that it is impossible (as Mr. Le Fevre * has observed) "to represent them in our language, without doing violence to the author." In the sequel of this performance, we shall not be at all the less acquainted with his works. As for the tragedies of the two other poets, I have not chosen out the finest for my translation: I have chosen only those who have appeared to me to contain the least of the Grecian customs, at all of which we are so liable to take offence. I must except *Alcestes*, which I have on purpose translated entire, because that play seems not, in my opinion, to have deserved the outrageous criticisms which have been made upon it, from the affected translations of some particular scenes. My veracity may be judged of by the fidelity which I have endeavoured to preserve in that piece.

My opinion of translating these poets is this. To disfigure is not to translate them. Therefore we must take an exact medium between too scrupulous an exactness, which disguises them, and too great licence, which alters them. What I call disguising an author, is, to expose him in a foreign language, with an exactness that is either foolish, malicious, or superstitious. Every language has the arrangement of its own ideas, its phrases, and its words, be

* The abridgment of the lives of the poets by *Tanaquil le Fevre*.

they noble or base, strong or feeble, lively or faint. This is a point not to be denied. Whoever would translate the ancients word for word into French, and still follow the Greek phraseology, must without doubt travesty those authors, and render them ridiculous at very little expence. This is the first degree of that false exactness, of which I have been speaking. The second, and the worst, is to change, as Monsieur Perrault * did, the finest expressions

* To explain my own thoughts as to the second degree, which may be called Parody, I beg my readers to pardon in a note the long citation which I am going to extract from a part of *Despreaux's* ninth reflexion upon *Longinus*.

" A noble expression in Greek cannot often be rendered into French, except by a very low expression in French. This appears by the words *ASSINUS* in Latin, and *ASNE* in French; which, in the one and the other of the two languages, are of the basest degree, although the word which signifies that animal, [*an ass*] has nothing base either in Greek or Hebrew, where we see it employed in the most magnificent passages. It is the same in the word *MULET*, [*a mule*] and in many others. Indeed every language has its caprice, but the French language is particularly capricious as to words, and, although rich in beautiful phrases upon some particular subjects, is very poor upon others; and there are a very great number of small things, not to be expressed nobly in French. Thus, for example, while in the most sublime places, we name without disparagement a SHEEP, a GOAT, an EWE, yet, in a stile only a little elevated, we cannot, without injury to our language, name a CALF, a SOW, a FIG. The word *MEIER* in French is very fine, especially in an eclogue. The word *Cow* is intolerable. To make use of the words *shepherd* or *pastor*, is elegant, whilst *keeper of swine*, or *keeper of oxen*, sound horrible: nevertheless there cannot be in Greek two more beautiful words, than *οἰστρον* and *βουδαρ*, which answer those two French expressions. Virgil, therefore, has intitled his eclogues

" by the soft word *BUCOLICS*, which, speaking in the letter of our language, is, THE DISCOURSES OF COW-HERDS, OR THE KEEPERS OF OXEN." After some lines intervening, Monsieur *Despreaux* returns again to those translations which are rendered unfaithful by an affected fidelity; and speaking of Monsieur *Perrault*, he says, "He changes that venerable old man, who had the care of the flocks belonging to Ulysses into a VILE SWINE HERD. In the places where *Homer* says, that NIGHT COVERED THE EARTH WITH HER SHADE, AND HID THE ROAD FROM TRAVELLERS, he translates, THAT THEY BEGAN TO SEE NOTHING IN THE STREETS. Instead of the magnificent sandals, which *Telemachus* ties on his delicate feet, he makes him put on his FINE SHOES of parade. In the place where *Homer*, to point out the elegance of *Nestor's* house, says, THAT THE FAMOUS OLD MAN WAS SITTING BEFORE HIS DOOR, UPON STONES SO FINELY POLISHED, THAT THEY SHONE AS IF THEY HAD BEEN RUBBED BY PRECIOUS OINTMENT, he translates, THAT *NESTOR* WENT TO SIT UPON STONES SHINING AS IF FROM OINTMENT. He every where explains the word *sus*, which is very noble in Greek, by the word *hog* or *swine*; which in French is low to the last degree. Instead of where *Agamemnon* says, THAT *Egisthus* CAUSED HIM TO BE ASSASSINATED IN HIS PALACE, LIKE A BULL, WHOSE THROAT IS CUT IN HIS STALL, he puts this low language into the mouth of *Agamemnon*, *EGISTHUS MADE ME BE ASSASSINATED LIKE AN OX*. Instead of saying, as the Greek imports, that *ULYSSES*, SEEING HIS VESSEL BROKE TO

PIECES,

sions that antiquity held in use, into low and vulgar terms. This may be called Parody. The third degree is, to keep to a scrupulous slavery in explaining all the epithets, and to form from one beautiful Greek word, one very bad French phrase; or, to use an improper extension, which deadens the fire of those poets, notwithstanding all the pains they have taken to enliven their poetry. In justice, indeed, we ought to make them speak so like Frenchmen, (as much as it can be done), as they themselves would have spoken, if they had put their thoughts into our language. Why need we change into brass a sum of money that we can keep in gold? The ancient versification may be very happily rendered into a poetical prose, that joins its own graces to those of the ancient poetry. If much is lost on our side, a little is gained on the other: not that I flatter myself that I have entirely succeeded, nor that I am utterly fallen short. In a work given to the examination of the public, presumption and false modesty are equally to be avoided. We gain nothing by asking favour or justice from the reader. I shall be obliged to him at least for an attention to my sincerity. My only fear is, that I shall appear too faithful to my authors. It is scarce possible to avoid a certain prejudice, that the Grecians ought to be translated with a more respectful exactness than the Latins. This illusion has deceived me oftner than I could have wished, notwithstanding the fine example set before me by Monsieur Ablancourt. But to confess the whole truth, we see that this scrupulous exactness has had a languishing effect upon Homer, the most animated of all poets: and probably from the same reason, two tragedies

"PIECES, AND HIS MAST TURNED UPSIDE
"DOWN BY A THUNDERBOLT, HE TIED
"TOGETHER, AS WELL AS HE COULD, THE
"MAST WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE
"SHIP, AND SAT UPON THEM; he makes
"Ulysses say, THAT HE PUT HIMSELF ON
"HORSEBACK UPON HIS MAST."

The third degree of dangerous fidelity is that which I explained in this discourse.

Aristotle again says extremely well in the twenty-third chapter of his Art of poetry,
"In the greatest part of the verses of
"Homer, if, instead of polished and metaphorical phrases, the translator thought

"proper to put the peculiar terms of the
"original, all the beauty would be destroyed." This assertion is sufficient to shew the difficulty of translating the ancients, and the impossibility of translating all.

For the pretended injuries done, as it is said, to the ancient heroes, it is certain that the fashion of languages changing, we should translate at this day very ill, in turning, as *Ameyot* has done, these verses in the first book of *Homer*;

Drunkard, with eyes shameless as a dog,
With the heart of a deer, who hath not a grain of courage.

of

of Sophocles have not received all the success which they might have expected. I allow all possible justice to their translators; but I owe, at the same time, something to truth. Much more spirit and genius is necessary to turn these sort of works, than to manage works of philosophy. There is a fire that blazes even into faults, and a languor that even makes the Greeks expire. In my stile, supposing it careless, I should chuse to introduce all the enthusiasm of the Grecian poets, rather than to give it an air of colness, in order to be perfectly exact. A cold translation is a face of wax. It bears a resemblance in some manner, but every feature is frozen and dead. No signs of life appear there, as are happily visible in pictures. The nice touches are not to be found, or are totally extinct. If I have ever by chance dropt into this insipid resemblance, the readers will at least see, that I have done so against my taste, and contrary to my endeavours.

Above all things, I have spared no pains to paint the particular character of each poet, and to represent him in a different style: for although the three masters of tragedy have something in common, as to their manner, nevertheless each bears his own genius, which must be hit; as physiognomies of the same nation that answer each other in some point, but have not always a resemblance.

Notes have been absolutely necessary towards understanding the text. I have put some, but as few, and as short as possible, being entirely convinced, that a theatrical piece ought to be read together, and without interruption, if we wish to enter into the sentiment, and to see the oeconomy of the tragedy. In Hippolitus and Iphigenia, I have not omitted to insert the imitations of Racine. The one is of use to the other, and the whole conducts to the same end, by making the same impression.

That nothing may be left in the dark, there will be found at the beginning of each tragedy, as much of the subject explained as may be necessary, without preventing the pleasure of surprize: and at the end will be found some critical observations upon the turn and taste of each piece.

In

In my second * part, I have thought it impossible to translate at full length the greatest part of the Grecian tragedies: and indeed I doubt whether in this particular Monsieur or Madame Dacier would have kept the promise which they seemed to have given to the public. They would not only have been repulsed by the unconquerable prejudices against certain fictions, and certain ancient customs, much too offensive to us, but also by a great number of particular passages, wherein all the beauty is precisely drawn from the original expressions. Such are the greatest part of the Chorusses. The French urbanity cannot reach their atticism. The appearance must be the same as our little songs would make, if turned into Greek. One single turn in every language, weighs often as much as a thought: nay, in truth, it is a thought. But in a foreign language, it is manna that melts, a phantom that vanishes, or at least, a flower that fades away. Could I have overcome the second difficulty, the first appeared to me an insurmountable obstacle against an entire translation of the Grecian tragedies. I have supplied the defect, by taking a road which is a little different, and which is perhaps more agreeable, and not less instructive: I mean, by making use of analyses, formed in such a manner of discourse, as to contain an almost entire translation, in which no considerable passage is omitted, and by which the poet is as fully known as by a continued translation. I am particularly less extensive upon Eschylus for the causes already mentioned; but for his two competitors, I believe I have left no part of their works untouched. The exposition of those works will be found so particularized, that I think I shall not be condemned for having wandered sometimes out of the direct road of a translator. An analysis carefully composed, and which preserves the quintessence of the poet, representing the principal parts, and the entire plan of the poem, is often of more value than translation itself, and may make full as great an impression as the piece of which it gives an idea. It saves all critical trouble, by pointing out to him the strength and weakness of the work. May I presume to say, it is less tiresome: and,

* See page xi, where he says he has divided his work into three parts.

still to speak farther, there are certain pieces of theatrical antiquity, that would be as tiresome, if exposed too nakedly to some readers, as they have been heretofore diverting at Athens. Now, nothing can be so injurious to a book as being tired of it, although it does not deserve that fate. Let me not be thought to have concealed what have appeared to me defects. I always make them perceptible, and I discover them without disguise; even at the hazard of offending those who are willing, that whatever bears the stamp of antiquity, should be sacred. You will say, that possibly I may be mistaken: Be it so. If I am in the wrong, it will always be at my own expence; if I am in the right, truth will be the gainer. The nature of analyses, and the desire of making the Grecian theatre more thoroughly known, have induced me to gather in my way, and to place as I go, all particulars bearing any conformity to that theatre: Such as pieces of history; thoughts of various poets; characters; and imitations, whether intended, or by chance. But in this I shall be found sufficiently reserved, not to give into two extremes, while I am thus pretending to speak the sentiments of all the world. There being a rational medium between the proud shew of misplaced erudition, and the empty nonsense of a discourse destitute of necessary enquiries, and deprived of the useful remnants of antiquity.

I have particularly attached myself to Seneca's theatrical works, because most of the Latin pieces, which we have under his name, are drawn from the Greeks. The critical confrontation upon those works will appear, and, no doubt, the Roman theatre under the reign of Augustus, of which the envy of time has deprived us, will be much regretted. Seneca and Lucan will be always allowed to have been, in some measure, the original of the French theatre: just as small sources springing out of the bosom of rocks, produce noble rivers, whose borders appear delightful.

The illustrious modern authors, who have taken any particular subject from the Greek poets, have not escaped me. Their imitations, compared with the models, cannot but throw a great light upon the originals, with whom we are desirous to be acquainted. Of these will be found in this work about sixty different pieces, of

which seven are of Eschylus, as many of Sophocles, eighteen of Euripides, and eleven of Aristophanes. Precious remains of works of the same sort, which the fruitfulness of the Grecian genius had brought forth, and which ignorance and barbarism, assisted by time, have buried under the ruins of their own magnificent theatres.

I speak nothing of the living authors, who have transported some of the riches of the Grecian scene to our theatre. I neither praise nor blame the sources from whence they have made their draughts. It is a rule of policy, that ought to be established in the republic of letters, only to cite dead authors. Adulation and satyr must lose by such a rule. Truth only can gain by it. I speak little of the theatres belonging to other European nations. This is not intended as a complete history of all theatres; and besides, we are sufficiently well versed in the ideas which our neighbours entertain of that matter, and wherein they agree and differ from us. Each nation may boast with pleasure, of having attained the utmost perfection of some one kind of literature. Posterity can only be the judge among the several countries, on which to bestow the preference. It is posterity only that gives the just reward to the productions of human wit. It is posterity only that fixes the idea and rules of true taste in those works that are rendered immortal. All the different opinions are gathered together. Thus the sentiments of the majority have been always in favour of Greece and Rome.

In my third * part, I have added to the two divisions already spoken of, a third, which relates particularly to the ancient comic theatre. It contains a long discourse upon the Grecian comedy, and a very ample exposition of eleven pieces of Aristophanes ranged according to the order of their dates, and a general summary of the whole work. The discourse turns upon the person and the works of Aristophanes; upon his partizans and his critics; upon what we ought to think of each; upon the Roman comedy; upon the remarkable difference, especially in regard to duration, between the

* Not of his prefatorial discourses, but of his whole work.

tragic and comic taste. Upon the question, Whether it is more difficult to succeed in tragedy or in comedy, &c.? The reader is afterwards prepared to read such parts as may be read of Aristophanes, by necessary observations, and by the chronological order of the Peloponnesian war, to which almost all the pieces of Aristophanes make frequent allusions. In the account of those pieces all the historical events, and such passages as relate to those events, and deserve explanation, are explained. Whatever can be translated, is translated. Four principal objects are propounded, and placed before the eyes of the reader, particularly the government of Athens, unveiled from the allegories of the poet, and the genius of the ancient comedy. Lastly, the general conclusion retraces all the preceding steps, and all the errors of human wit in the invention, the progress, and the various decays of the theatre. In a word, I have tried to omit nothing that might lead to a thorough knowledge of Aristophanes, and might shew the turn of his railery, his particular beauties, his faults, his allegorical paintings, and most especially those that represent the people of Athens. I have endeavoured to produce the same kind of fruit in the exposition of Æschylus, of Sophocles, and of Euripides. It is by this complete assemblage and continued chain of translations, criticisms, reasonings, and comparisons of taste, that a sort of history of the theatrical genius is composed: and a new species of the art of poetry, of which the principal object has induced me to intitle it *THE THEATRE OF THE GREEKS*.

May I be pardoned one word before I end: It is this, that by equally avoiding the pride of panegyric, and the injustice of satyr, I affect not to put on a false air of moderation, in order more cunningly to raise the ancients, or more certainly to depress them.

On one hand, it has been thought right to make them pass as perfectly accomplished in their kind: great care has been taken to draw a curtain over their imperfections: and if some small errors have been acknowledged in them, it has only been with a design to slide more lightly over visible faults, such as have been attempted to be kept hid, and snatched from the too penetrating observations of the world. To this height has been carried the imperceptible interest which

ties by secret knots the commentator to the author, as if the glory of the one was to be reflected back entire upon the other.

On the other hand *, it has been undertaken to attack antiquity, without even sparing those ruins which antiquity has respected: and some particular beauties have only received favour, that the rest might be treated with contempt. Great art, and great study, has been bestowed to praise the genius of the authors, in order to discredit their works; and it has been wished that they had writ in an happier age, merely to throw a ridicule upon the ignorance and vulgarity of their times. To say the truth, every work of wit springs from reason and taste. But is it just to employ our talents to seduce reason, and to determine taste by our own ideas, and our own particular manner of thinking? A dissembled moderation is then so much the more dangerous, as no body is guarded against it, nor can be persuaded that either a secret interest or a determined passion makes us speak. Under this veil we respectfully break the altar to pieces, at the same time pretending to save the idol. Such is the insinuating proceeding of artful detraction: for I do not speak of those outrageous expressions, not to call them worse, which have appeared against the ancients, notwithstanding the sage precepts of so good a judge as Quintilian. In those points the ancients have been sufficiently revenged. Persons of penetration, and the public, always prepared against invectives, and whatever favours of pride, has disavowed and mistrusted such proceedings. We ought to shew the ancients, such as they are, without falling into raptures upon their most plain thoughts, or giving to them a disagreeable air, either by parodied translations, which are still more unfaithful, by pretending to a ridiculous exactness, or by malicious applications of their morals to ours: or again, by retrenching certain circumstances which ought to be known, in order to pass a proper judgment upon their writings,

I shall not speak any thing for myself, in the design I have undertaken, of approaching as near as possible, to that exact degree

* In all this article, which in general regards the enemies of the ancients, I protest that I do not in the least attempt directly or indirectly, to offend certain persons

whom I honour, whose talents I respect, and who do so much honour to our present age.

of esteem in which these ancient authors ought to be placed. The poets will speak for them. So much has been written upon the theatre, that it is difficult to say any thing new. But the manner which I have at present pursued, has not been already done as I know of. Much has been given to the theory, in compliance to the rules of Aristotle, and much, as Monsieur the Abbe Aubignac says, to the practice. But the ancient theatre, to be thoroughly known, still wanted to be exposed in the proper point of light to be seen. That is to say, there wanted an exposition of the tragic and comic performances, in the manner in which they were composed, and with the inseparable conjunctions of places and of times. For it is only from the report of all these things, that we can decide upon the value of the works in themselves, or in regard to the moderns. Here will be found, properly speaking, a breviary of the case, according to the common law of the Grecian nation. A very necessary thing for judges, whom we neither intend to surprize nor to bias. Even Pyrrhonism * in such a case, would be preferable to a precipitated judgment; because it is a preservative against error, and shews an inclination not to reject truth, when it is known.

As to what concerns myself, I expect from the public, neither indulgence nor rigour. I have endeavoured, with a great deal of care, to paint my authors in a just manner: and to form a work that may be a little durable. If that work should not please the great number of those who are capable of judging of it, I shall not have that superstition for the ancients, as to take the whole fault upon myself, (as Monsieur Dacier has done) nor so much complaisance for myself, as not to attribute something to my own defects. I shall wait with patience for the success of some more able, or more happy person, and I shall be the first to give him applause.

* Scepticism, called Pyrrhonism from a sect of philosophers, of whom Pyrrho was the chief, who doubted every thing.

A
DISCOURSE
UPON THE
ORIGINAL OF TRAGEDY.

AS I here undertake less to establish the outward parts of tragedy than to lay open her secret resources, I shall not extend my work in researches after pure erudition concerning the first inventors of the tragic art, the construction of theatres, the personages, the machines, the dresses, the masks, the music, and the dances. These are things which may be partly discussed from their original springs, or in different particular treatises. I propose principally to give a succinct history of the several advancements made by the human genius, in the invention and perfection of the theatre.

The origin
and perfec-
tion of arts.

I. Necessity or pleasure induced men to undertake arts. But those arts owe their birth to chance or nature, rather than to our pains. Successive and reiterated reflexions at length brought to perfection, what chance only had offered, as it were, of herself; and those reflexions, by ripening and opening themselves like the buds of the creation, have at length grown up into art, in such a manner as to supply so many established principles in mechanick and in literature. It is thus that Aristotle has followed in philosophy the thread of thoughts spun from the heads of the tragic poets, and has from thence established an art of poetry reduced into rules, in the same manner as he has done in the art of rhetoric for eloquence, and of logic for reason, with this difference only, that good sense had taught mankind to think and reason justly, before any rules

rules for thinking and reasoning were thought proper to be laid down, whereas tragedy and comedy, though much older than Aristotle, were not from original time.

II. However, as a proof that nature and chance are the first authors, not only of tragedy, but of other imitations, such as painting, music, and poetry, we find traces from time immemorial of theatrical works in divers polite nations, who have not communicated that taste to each other. For example; we see that the Chinese, who have borrowed nothing from the Greeks, have had, without knowing how, a kind of tragedy which they have practised in their own manner. What Acoſta* reports of it is ſingular enough. "The Chinese, ſays that author, have vaſt, and very agreeable theatres. The dreſſes for their actors are magnificent. The representation of their plays continue ten or twelve days together, comprehending as many nights. They laſt ſo long, that the ſpectators and the actors, tired by a perpetual ſucceſſion of drinking, eating, dozing, and continuing the play, or at leaſt attending it without interruption, retire at laſt, as it were, by agreement." Here you perceive that theſe theatrical entertainments are conformable to the cool diſpoſition and phlegmatic character of that tranquil nation. "Beſides, adds he, the Chinese are entirely a moral people, and, above all things, animated by the famous examples of philoſophers and heroes, recorded in the antiquities of China."

The art of tragedy common to polite nations.

We ſee even among the celebrated Incas of Peru regular theatrical pieces, if we are to give credit to Garcillaſſo de la Vega †. "They repreſented, ſays he, upon feſtival days, tragedies and comedies in due form, intermingling them with interludes, which contain nothing either low or groveling. The ſubjects of their tragedies were the exploits and victories of their kings and their heroes. On the other hand, their comedies were drawn from agriculture, and the moſt common actions of human life: the whole mingled with ſentences full of ſenſe and gravity." So

* Acoſta Amer. 9th part, book vi. chap. 6.

† Garcillaſſo de la Vega, in the firſt part of his royal commentaries, chap. 6.

xxiv A DISCOURSE UPON THE

true it is, that men resemble themselves throughout the whole, and that throughout the whole the arts of imitation are drawn from the same source : That source is nature.

The Epoch
uncertain of
the Grecian
tragedy.
What it was
before Es-
chylus.

III. Chance and Bacchus produced the first ideas of tragedy in Greece. The story of it is sufficiently known. Bacchus, who had discovered the secret of cultivating vines, and drawing wine out of them, communicated his art to a certain man called Icarius, in a part of Attica, which has since taken the name of Icaria*. This man, one day, meeting a goat who was making great havoc in his vineyard, sacrificed it to his benefactor, as much for interest as gratitude. Certain peasants, who had been witnesses of the sacrifice, immediately began to dance round the victim, at the same time singing praises to the God.

This slight diversion became an annual custom, afterwards a public sacrifice, afterwards an universal ceremony, and, at last, a profane theatrical entertainment. For, as in the pagan antiquity, all things were made sacred, the playful amusements were changed into festivals, and the temples, in their turns, were metamorphosed into theatres. But this came on only by degrees. The Greeks beginning to polish themselves, introduced feasts into their cities, which had taken rise during leisure time in the country. The most distinguished poets assumed a glory in composing religious hymns, to the honour of Bacchus. To these hymns were added all the charms that music and dancing could diffuse. This gave occasion of disputing the prize in poetry; and this prize, at least, in the country, was a goat or a budget of wine, in allusion to the name of the Bacchinal hymn, long since called Tragedy;

* Icaria, a mountain of Attica, once inhabited by the people who were of the Egeidian tribe. They were the first who sacrificed a goat to Bacchus, it having ravaged their vineyards, and with them first was invented the ancient comedy or tragedy.—Spon. Voyage to Italy.

This mountain had a city of its name, the birth-place of Thespis, the ancient Greek poet. He lived about the year of the

world 3530. As in his time tragedy was not played except by a troop of musicians and dancers, who sung hymns in praise of Bacchus, Thespis, to give the performers a resting time, introduced an actor, who between the two cantos of the chorus, recited a discourse relative to the turn of the tragedy, and this discourse was called an Epilogue.

Th. Corneille. Geograph. Diction.

that is to say, *The song of the goat, or of the vintage*. This was the whole entertainment during a great number of years. Still they continued to render it more and more perfect, but did not change it. It established the reputation of fifteen or sixteen poets, almost all of them successors to each other. It appears sufficiently evident, that neither in the hymns nor chorusses which they sung, the least trace of the true tragedy is to be found. The name, and not the idea, is only to be discovered.

We have room, however, to conjecture, that these pieces of poetry became serious, sensible, and moving: almost such as the hymn of the Persians, which is described by Chardin *, and which is divided into seven cantos, composed in honour of Mahomet and Ali, in which are thoughts and sentiments that have something of the tragic spirit. A person of learning †, to whom I owe many of the lights dispersed through my work, carries this conjecture much farther. I have often heard him say, that he believed the first chorusses had not any other foundation but the death of Bacchus or Oziris, killed by Typhon; and that they had begun to be in use among the Egyptians, from whom they passed to the Greeks. But indeed, not to stop at these particulars, it is certain that the simple chorusses upon Bacchus were no more tragedies than the secular poems of the Romans.

Besides, the poets themselves grew weary at last of these Bacchanal eulogies, which probably lost their fire, as they were reiterated upon the same subject, and besides, turned more to the profit of the priests, than to the pleasure of the spectators. One of these poets, it was Thespis, had at once the boldness to make some alterations, and the good fortune to succeed in the attempt. He took upon him, under pretence of relieving the chorus, to interrupt it by recitals. This novelty pleased. But what were these recitals ‡? Did that single actor whom he introduced, play alone a tragedy? It is plain he did not. There can be no tragedy without a dialogue: and there can be no dialogue without two interlocutory persons at least. I presume that Thespis, carrying the idea of Homer, whose books were recited throughout Greece, thought

* Chardin, the first part.

† The reverend father Tournemine.

‡ Aristotle's Art of Poetry, chap. xi.

Conjecture
upon the tra-
gedies of
Thespis, and
of his succe-
ssors.

that his historical tracts, whither historical or fabulous, serious or comic, would amuse the Greeks. *He bedaubed the faces of the actors with lees of wine*, says Horace*, to make them more exactly resemble satyrs, and he carried them about in carts, where they often were very bitter upon those who passed near them. This is the original of satyrical tragedies; but there was something more in the serious tragedies, of which Thespis only planned the first draught. There is sufficient ground to imagine, that only one single actor appeared, and recited. He supposed an action real, and came in the intervals of the chorus, to give an account of it to the spectators, either by way of narration, or by acting the part of one hero, then of another, and again of a third. I will suppose, for example, that Thespis, or any one of his successors, had taken for his subject the anger of Achilles. I imagine that his actor representing the priest of Apollo came to say, that he had in vain tried to bend Agamemnon by prayers and presents; that the inflexible king obstinately persisted in not giving up the priest's daughter Chryseis: that, in consequence of that obstinacy, Chryses implored the assistance of his god towards his own revenge. In a second soliloquy, the same actor, or if you please another, made it understood, that Apollo had revenged Chryses, by pouring down upon the Grecian camp an outrageous plague, which caused the utmost desolation. According to appearances, the same conduct was continued to the end: and this is the most probable imagination to be formed, in supposing with Aristotle, that there was but one actor†. But, after all, these recitals of an action, which itself was not visible, were only a kind of epic poem. In short, in all this, we cannot as yet find true tragedy.

To say the most, perhaps there are some slight sketch of it; for besides, that the subject of the recitals by the actor were one continued action, the accessory, by little and little, bore away the principal. Thespis, Phrynicus, Cherilus, and all the authors who composed in the taste of Thespis, forgot almost entirely the destination of the chorus, and no longer introduced Bacchus. From whence, says

* Horace's Art of Poetry, ver. 277.

† THE PARASITES have something of the air of the ancient tragedy or comedy.—See

the works of Villon, newly reprinted at Paris, 1723.

Plutarch *, it happened that Tragedy was turned from her original aim, and passed from the honours rendered to Bacchus, into fables and representations of passion. The priests complained of it, and their complaints gave rise to a proverb, "That's fine, said they, but Bacchus is not to be seen in it." The difficulty is to know how Thespis invented this first shadow of tragedy, if the chorusses did not give way to it. Nature generally goes from one step to another in arts, as well as in her other productions; and it almost always happens, that the new idea which arises, bears some relation to what gave rise to it. It is surprising, that neither Aristotle, nor those who have treated upon the subject, shew us with any degree of exactness the several changes which Tragedy has received in Greece, from her birth to her maturity. Nor is it less surprising, that they do not say plainly, Philostratus † and Quintilian ‡ excepted, one particular, which is often necessarily to be concluded from their writings, I mean, that Eschylus was the true inventor of what is properly called Tragedy. All in effect agree to say, that he joined a second actor to the first of Thespis. There then were interlocutors, there was dialogue, and consequently there was the bud of tragedy. Before the time of Eschylus there was no such thing. Eschylus ||, therefore, is the father. Sophocles and Euripides after him ran in the same career; and in less than an age, the Greek tragedy, which was formed on a sudden by the hand of Eschylus, arrived at that point where the Greeks have left it to

* "Just as when Phrynicus and Eschylus first changed tragedy (which was the song of the goat, made in honour of Bacchus), into fables and representations to move the passions, the people began to say, *What is all this to the purpose, when Bacchus is the theme?* In the same manner, I have often purposed to say to those who at a feast introduced that sophistry, which they call masterly, *My friends, what has Bacchus to do with this?*" Plutarch's Symposium, Book I. Quest. 1.

† Philostrat. The life of Apollonius Tyanneus.

‡ Quintil. Oratorical institutions, Book X.

|| Eschylus was the first who brought actors into the scene. There were none before him.—Aristotle's Art of Poetry, chap. 4.

As there was anciently in tragedy but a single chorus, who played alone; and as Thespis came afterwards, and invented a personage, to give a resting time to the chorus, and Eschylus to this first personage added a second, and Sophocles a third, by which they gave a form to tragedy; so has the same thing arrived to philosophy. At first there were only Physics, Socrates invented Morals, and Plato added Logic, and by that means perfected Philosophy.—Diogen. Laertius.

us: for, although the poets whom I have just now mentioned, had rivals of very great merit, who often conquered them in the public entertainments, the votes of their cotemporaries, and of posterity, are nevertheless united in their favour. They are acknowledged as the masters of the ancient scene, and it is only from the few pieces which remain of their works, that we can judge of the theatre of the Greeks.

The true
source of
tragedy.

IV. It is in point of its maturity, that I now intend to consider the art of tragedy, and to search the source of it in the human genius. Homer * is the source of it beyond all contradiction; I mean of epic poetry. For even, if Plato † and Aristotle had not said so in equivalent terms, reason alone would make us easily perceive it, by considering the coherence of those two kinds of poetry [the tragic and the epic], and the manner in which nature acts upon fancy in the invention of arts. In effect, the transition of the Epopea ‡ to tragedy, is more natural than that of the simple chorusses of Bacchus to the invention of Thespis. I question even whether that is not owing to Homer.

Ælian * makes mention of a painter, who took upon him to represent the prince of the poets, near in the same manner that Horace has painted to us the genius of Pindar. From the mouth of Homer issued forth a plentiful spring, that divided itself into different streams. A whole troop of poets were seen to draw from it with great eagerness, as if it had appeared to them the fountain of Castalia. Such a picture is by no means a picturesque flattery in favour of Homer. It is the same piece of justice which was ren-

* "Homer has been the first who has given us, as it were, a rough sketch of comedy, by changing into pleasantry the bitter railleries of the first poets. In effect his *Margites* has the same connection with Comedy that his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have with Tragedy."—Aristot. *Art of Poetry*, chap. 4.

† Plato explains himself still clearer than Aristotle; for in the eighth book of his *Republic*, he says, "It is time to examine

"Tragedy, and Homer, who has introduced it."

‡ Epic poetry, or poem.

* Ptolomy Philopater, having built a temple in honour of Homer, placed him there upon a throne encompassed with cities, who disputed with each other, the honour of having given him birth. The painter Galeton painted this poet with a spring, which spouted from his mouth, and from which the other poets went to draw water. —Ælian *various hist.* Book xiii. chap. 22.

dered

dered to him by Eschylus, who used to say, that his own pieces were only remnants of those feasts displayed by Homer in his Iliad and Odyſſey.

In order to open clearly the connection of arguments made use of by Eschylus and his contemporaries in the tragic art, let us see how Homer * would reason in regard to the epic kind of poetry. He would reason thus.

V. Nothing can give greater pleasure to mankind, naturally imitators, than a fine imitation of nature. The art of Painting is too much limited to produce a satisfaction equal to the art of Poetry. It is the latter only that seizes whatever is delicate in our sentiments, and most lively in our thoughts. It is the latter only that descends into our very entrails, and strikes surprisingly the most secret recesses of our heart. She unites the charms of Painting and of Music, but she herself has indelible charms, which she borrows not from others, and which are only known to herself. Naked Truth scarce ever renders herself relishable. It is Poetry that can instruct men by diverting them. History is agreeable and useful, but Poetry, by settling History, gives to it a more attractive point of view: that is to say, by retrenching the irregular parts of History,

The art of
Homer.

* In the argument which I here make for Homer, I do not pretend that he alone, and all at once, has invented the art of epic poetry. I mean by Homer, the human genius aided by preceding discoveries. I know that Homer was neither the first poet, nor perhaps the first epic poet: and I voluntarily yield to the judicious reflection made by father Sanadon, in his twenty-eighth note upon the seventh epistle of Horace.

A notion prevails that the Greeks caught at once the perfection of poetry, and that their very first works were master-pieces. At least, this is the opinion of Monsieur Dacier. I will venture, however, to say, that nothing can have less foundation than such an idea. Were it true, it must be one of the greatest prodigies that can be imagined. Our genius is such, that a man is long searching to meet with what is right; and

does not arrive at having true ideas of what is good and beautiful, 'till after he has passed successively through a great number of errors. Before Homer, Greece had produced an Orpheus, a Musæus, a Linus, and many other celebrated poets, mentioned by several authors, exclusive of those whose names are lost with their works. Even Homer was not the first who undertook to sing the war of Troy, and to introduce mythology into his works. But he is the most ancient of the Grecian poets, who has survived the injuries of time; and he is the most ancient, because, in all probability, he has succeeded better than those who went before him, and has also written in an age when his native language had attained its utmost purity.

This thought of mine will be seen hereafter.

and

and by adding some bolder touches of her own, she renders it capable of still producing greater effects towards instruction and pleasure. If therefore I have an intention to entertain the people of my own nation by a poem, I ought to search for the foundation of it in my own country, and to adorn it with all the riches that Poetry affords. The anger of Achilles, so fatal to the Grecians, is a very proper topic to instruct and to please the Greeks; for, in order to attain that end (of giving pleasure and instruction) we must have an interest, and nothing interests us more than what touches us. Farther, I must limit myself to one single action, of which the beginning, the progress, and the end, must not be lengthened out to an enormous degree. That would disgust. But still it must be considerable enough to satisfy the curiosity of the readers. It is a picture which I ought to delineate. I must regulate, therefore, the arrangement and the proportions, whether it be of the whole, or of particular parts, to the eye-sight of the spectators: and not to fatigue them, I must give those delicate and just proportions which nature places with so much care in all her productions. The poet is the painter of nature. Now I find in the anger of Achilles, a great subject, a simple subject, an interesting subject, the design of which, if the poem is well conducted, is to let the readers see, while they are entertained, that a disunion among the chiefs is always hurtful to the state. This will not be the only lesson that will be found there for the improvement of manners. As we must always engage our readers by circumstances most connective to their ideas, I shall throughout the work mix tracts of morality, philosophy, and virtue, which are the ideas best received, even among the vicious part of mankind.

But to trace the design of the whole work, I must at first observe, that the action should bear the resemblance of truth throughout the conduct of it, as it is true in the groundwork the probability of a fable that seduces, joined to the reality of history that persuades, make a double impression: and ingenious falsehoods, with all the allurements of error, have still the weight of truth when they deceive, in order to benefit mankind. To that probability, which ought to reign throughout the whole, I shall join unity as a principal part; for if I mix together many independent actions, it would be no longer

longer a picture: it would be a variety of paintings that would not make a beautiful whole. Thus I shall confine myself to one single commanding action; so that the other actions, which necessarily must be joined to it, shall not be possible to be separated from it, without disfiguring the work, as no one part can be taken from the human body without spoiling oeconomy and the proportion. By this means my principal action will be one, entire, and perfect. The duration of that action will depend not alone upon the number of events, all conformable to probability, but it must also be within reach of the readers, who ought to be in a situation to see, by one glance of their eye, and without fatigue, the limits and the foundation of the action. Reason prescribes this regulation of time to the poet, very different in this particular to the rules proposed to the historian and the annalist. Their business is to run over the whole space of years afforded them by their materials; whilst the poet, master of his time and of his bounds, is obliged to measure each in regard to the other, and to confine himself to boundaries that must not be either too narrow, or too extensive. Taste only can decide this. History is an immense country. The Epopea is a landskip. The historian carries his readers a voyage. The poet only makes them take a walk.

I shall not therefore paint my hero in his full extent, when my design is only to describe his exploits. I should then be either an historian, or an errant maker of verses. I shall confine myself to his anger against Agamemnon, upon account of his carrying away Chriseis. I shall even take care not to take up this event too high. But I shall begin, if I may so express myself, at the foot of the wall: and I shall immediately lay open the dispute of those two princes in the camp, without staying to describe the war of Troy; that description afterwards must find a place that will render it more conspicuous. This quarrel shall be the first part of the poem, and the overture to the events that are to follow. The second part shall consist of the combats between the Greeks and Trojans, during the absence of the enraged Achilles. This shall be the plot. Jupiter shall weigh in his balance the fate of the two nations. He shall preserve or break the equilibrium according to the decrees of destiny.

destiny, and the intrigues of the gods, sometimes propitious, sometimes not. The Greeks now and then conquerors, but much oftener conquered, shall at length find the extreme want they have of Achilles. He shall be inexorable, and shall refuse them his assistance, 'till the death of his friend Patrocles killed by Hector animates him to vengeance, and makes him give to resentment what he refused to grant to equity. He shall determine to fight against Hector, and shall kill him. This is the unravelling, and the end of the action.

I said, that in the plot and ground-work of my poem, I should employ people, chiefs; and gods, in opposition to each other; because the passions of men are to be roused, and they are to be awakened by objects that are marvellous. The human heart, which has no other guide but self-love, delights to find itself every where employed, and consequently to see in another the motions of that grief, that joy, that fear, that hate, or that affection, by which it feels itself agitated: naturally vain, restless, curious for what is to happen, and admirer of what is extraordinary, it seeks to feed itself with ideas conformable to its own desires. To answer this, pretended prodigies and pretended passions are necessary, but they must bear the air of truth. What appears incredible or monstrous shocks us. I shall satisfy these two tastes, by animating all nature, by giving movement and life even to inanimate things, and by firing with passion gods and men. My divinities, my kings, and their people, shall act and speak according to received ideas; for it is not a question to be examined, whether the system and the moral of the fable be good or bad in itself? The fable is received; that is enough: and if a work is to be relished, we must paint the objects of it such as they are presented to us by nature and education. If posterity will deign to consider, that the times in which I write must have been very different from the times in which I am read, this will be the great principle that will justify me in the eyes of the most distant futurity. As to the characters, I shall diversify them according to my actors; but, notwithstanding their several situations, I shall know so well to mark, and shall even to the end keep them up with so much strength, that no ac-

cusation shall be brought against me, of falling short of Nature, or going too far beyond her.

It is upon this plan undoubtedly, that Homer conceived and formed that Iliad which is the entertainment of all ages: or, if the mechanism of that art which he invented did not come all at once into his mind nearly such as I have described it, it came at least successively, and by degrees, as he went forward in the formation of that great work, from which all the rules of the epic art may be drawn. It is the mechanism of the poem only that is such as I have already said; for I speak not of those reflexions, whether unravelled, or so secret, as to be scarce perceptible, which Homer must have made upon the manner of executing his plan, when the whole work was to be put together. I speak not, for example, either upon the rapidity, the continuation, and the order of his narration. I touch not upon the difference and happy mixture of his recitals, with his discourses: nor upon that fire spread by the one throughout the poem, or the charms displayed by the other, from imperceptible coherences. I neither speak of the splendour nor the simplicity of the descriptions: of the attractive pleasure of his images, sometimes noble and magnificent, sometimes cheerful and airy, sometimes gloomy and terrible: I mark not the transition from grave to sweet, from sublime to delicate, from tender to heroic; from gracious to something, I know not what, that is strong, austere, and fierce. I take no notice of the richness, the variety, and the justness of his comparisons: nor of that rational application made by him upon tracts of morality, nor of his sentences.

In short, I speak neither of the harmony of his verses, their enchanting turn, nor the genius of the expression adapted to the dignity of the poem, and susceptible of all sorts of form, without the least degradation.

It is not requisite here either to criticise Homer, or to justify him against the critics: and it is sufficient for me to have rapidly pursued his principal steps, in order to make from thence a comparison between him and the tragic poets, and to unravel that thought of Aristotle, which gives us to understand, that Tragedy owes her

birth to the Iliad and Odyssey, as Comedy owes her's to the *Margites* *. For to suppose, that the ancients wrote their works accidentally, and succeeded by chance, is to persuade us that a picture in which the design, the disposition, and the colourings, are admirable, was painted blindly, and without thought. The only reasonable doubt that can arise, is to enquire whether Homer himself did not work by models? for surely it is as ridiculous to believe with his adorers, that he is the inventor of all literary art; and inimitable, without having imitated any body, as to imagine with others, that he has done nothing very extraordinary, and that caprice only has served him as a guide. The succession of ideas which naturally rise, and are born from each other, and the constant procedure of nature in all things, gives room to believe that Homer may have received from his predecessors, the seeds of that art which he has carried to so great a height: and that the three degrees of tragedy of which I have spoken, owe something to him, till the time of Eschylus, who, by a depth of study, drew from thence the clear and precise idea of the tragic art. We will here see then how Eschylus ought to reason in his turn.

The art of
Eschylus.

VI. To read, and to see an action, are two very different things. The actor is more sensibly affecting than the reader. Whence does this arise? It is because he is more perfect. He talks at the same time both to the eyes and to the mind. Thespis, therefore, was particularly happy in devising an actor, who should recite such histories or fables as were proper to move the audience. But the imitation would be still more interesting, I imagine, if, in the same manner that Homer makes both Achilles and Agamemnon to hold discourse, I should introduce two actors into the scene. It would be then no longer an imitation. It would, in some manner, be a true representation; at least, the spectators being thus agreeably deceived, would see, in effect, what they could only hear and suppose, when one and the same actor plays the double part of Agamemnon and of Achilles. The eyes and the mind, seduced by

* A poem of Homer's, wherein he painted *Margites* as a man who knew nothing, and was good for nothing.

this kind of painting, so nearly approaching to truth, will easier forget that it is a picture. They will believe that they see the thing itself.

Through so clear a manner of reasoning, which undoubtedly enlightened the inventor (whoever he was) of theatrical dialogue, we may plainly see the first ray of tragedy shine forth. But Eschylus must have still been at greater pains in other reflexions to form that luminous edifice, of which he transmitted so many models to his contemporaries. He observed then that the Iliad of Homer, being only a moral truth decorated with a fable, to make it of use and amusement to the readers, he could, in the same manner, delight his spectators in an artificial composition of events, which contained some instruction, and from whence the mind might draw some morality. But because a spectator and a reader are two different things, he saw that his work ought to bear the same difference as the work of Homer, or as a representation to a lecture. The Iliad could not have had its effect but at several times. Lectures are interrupted and recommenced as we please. It is not so with a representation. Good sense requires, that we should see it closely continued, and that it should have its effects in a short time. The Chinese representations, which I have already mentioned, and those of *Pastor Fido*, which continued many days, prove only the abuse of that good sense which sometimes drops asleep even in the wisest nations. The violent heat which one continued feast always occasions, can only justify such a piece of madness. Eschylus ought, therefore, to confine himself to a shorter, and consequently a more animated work. For a sentiment that only passes, ought (in order to please) to be more lively than a continuity of sentiments, of which the duration is longer. And the principal passions which Homer touches, are all of them conformable to the length of his poem, and to the nature of man, considered in the light of a reader. Joy, curiosity, admiration, and those soft passions, may bind the heart a long time without fatiguing it. On the other hand, terror, indignation, hatred, pity, and a number of other passions, whose vivacity may drain the very soul, are treated in the Iliad in a cursory manner, and always with subordi-

nation to the moderate passions which we see reigning throughout the poem. But in a play, which ought not to last a long time, the lively passions may perform their part; and though subaltern in a poem, they may command in a tragedy, without tiring the spectator, who would be apt to doze, were the actions too lingering. This way of reasoning is founded in every thing else upon the real nature of passions. A man cannot sustain long a violent agitation. Anger has its transports. Revenge has its rage, but their last clamours are of small duration. If these sensations reside long in the heart, it is like fire stifled under embers. Their flame causes too great a conflagration to be durable. Desire, fright, pity, love, hatred itself; all of them, when carried to the greatest excess, exhaust themselves soon. The violence of a tempest, is the preface of its end. The lively and the short passions, therefore, are the true proper motions to animate the theatre. For if what I have said is true in nature, representation, which imitates nature, ought to be conformable to it; and the more because the passions, supposing them feigned, communicate themselves from man to man, in a more sudden manner than the flames of an house on fire catches the neighbouring edifices. Do we not feel our entrails moved at the sight of an unhappy creature, whose pitiable cries exposes to us the excess of his misery? Does not fear penetrate even to the marrow of our bones, when we see a city delivered up to the enemy; when we behold pale visages, trembling women, furious soldiers, and all the appearances of approaching desolation? How would this be heightened, were we to see the traces of rage and despair, which Nature herself imprints upon the face of a man, or of a people, destined to perish without resource? And what effects does not a pannic terror produce? A passion well imitated easily finds entrance into the human heart, because she tries to find the method of moving it, as if real. But a remarkable difference, which undoubtedly has struck Eschylus, is, that feigned passions procure to us a pure pleasure, when true passion can only give a short satisfaction soon overwhelmed with bitterness. It is a combat between joy and sorrow, but sorrow always overbalances the scale. Nature, to recompence man for what he suffers, and to

comfort him under his weight, furnishes to him sentiments conformable to his situation; but these sentiments, though mixed with lenitives, do not cure the wound of an ulcered heart. They only exasperate it, and yet we love them as if they were a remedy for the evil which we feel. From hence it happens, that it is an impossible undertaking to pretend to draw away sorrow from a person who is in grief, only by advising him not to be afflicted. His sorrow pleases him. It is the resource with which the author of nature supplies him in his affliction. But, if it is true that passions, even the most dreadful, carry with them a sensation of bitterness and delight, it is no less certain, that passions ingenuously imitated, convey to the soul only delight without bitterness. An horrible monster would make us shiver with fear. A miserable wretch, whom we could not relieve, would tear our entrails. But this monster, and this wretch, in painting, though the one was more frightful than the Lernean Hydra, and the other a greater object of pity than Belisarius, could not fail to give a very high delight to the spectator, if touched by an able hand; and it is from hence that Boileau has said so judiciously after Aristotle,

The monster hideous, and the serpent vile,
 Art to our eyes can subt'ly reconcile.
 Th' enchanting pencil makes that object lov'd,
 Which we with dread and horror disapprov'd.
 The tragic muse can summon from us tears,
 When blind and bleeding Oedipus appears.
 Orestes, parricide Orestes, charms,
 When all his passions all our own alarms.

See Boileau's Art of Poetry, Canto 3.

Lucretius, in the stile of a philosophic poet, has said the same thing, " That there is nothing more agreeable, than to consider
 " from port an agitated sea, and ships struggling against a violent
 " tempest; not that we take a pleasure in seeing others in pain,
 " but because it is agreeable to us to see misfortunes from which
 " we:

“ we are entirely exempt *.” It is not the view of an enemy that pleases, but it is the view of an enemy at a distance, of an enemy who would certainly hurt us, if we were in the same situation of those whom we see : a situation in which we are happy not to find ourselves. Now, if the real ills belonging to persons in whom we are not interested, except by the common interest of humanity, touches us so agreeably, by a return of complacency upon ourselves, how much more should we interest ourselves by an animated picture, which in representing to us pretended evils, shall conduct our natural sensibility in such a manner as to give us pure delight without any mixture?

Passions proper for tragedy.

VII. But if all the passions well represented produce this delicate pleasure, there are not any which produce it with greater vivacity than terror and compassion. They may be properly called the two hinges of the soul. As we are more sensible of ill than good, we hate more than we love, and our wishes are less ardent to be happy, than our fears are great to be miserable. From whence it arises, that fear is more natural to us, and gives us more frequent checks than any other passion. It inspires us inwardly with a thought always found true by experience, that human life is from every side besieged with evils. Pity, which is the only secret sensation of our souls at the sight of the evils that others suffer, and of which we ourselves may equally become the victims, has so close a connection with fear, that these two passions are inseparable in mankind, whom mutual wants oblige to live in civil society. This has made Virgil say, speaking of the inestimable blessing of a happy leisure enjoyed by a solitary philosopher, “ He is not under necessity to

* *Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
A terra magnum alterius spectare laborem,
Non quia vexari quemquam est jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.*

LUCRET. Lib. ii. V. 1.

’Tis pleasant, when the seas are rough, to stand
And view another’s danger safe at land :
Not ’cause he’s troubled, but ’tis sweet to see
Those cares and fears from which ourselves are free.

CREECH.

“ com-

“compassionate the misery of those who are virtuously indigent,
“nor need he envy those who are vitiously rich *.”

Fear and pity are the most dangerous passions, as they are the most common; for if one, and, by consequence of the close connection, the other, are eternally freezing up the heart of mankind, there is no farther room for that firmness of soul necessary to support the inevitable evils of life: nor can this reiterated impression be survived. Hence it is, therefore, that philosophy has employed so much art to *purge* (if I may make use of Aristotle's expression) both the one and the other, with a design to preserve all that is useful in them, and to throw away all that is pernicious. But it must be allowed, that in this particular point, poetry is of much greater weight than philosophy. The reasonings of the latter are too weak a preservative, or, at least, too doubtful a remedy, against the ill effects of the passions, while poetical images carry with them so much flattery and insinuation, that they make way for reason.

What appears most particular and surprising in this matter is, that poetry corrects fear by fear, and pity by pity. This circumstance is the more agreeable, because the human heart loves its own sentiments, and its own weaknesses. It fancies, that poetry is willing to flatter those weaknesses, and it finds itself insensibly cured by the pleasure it takes to be deceived. Happy error! of which the effect is the more certain, as the remedy springs from the evil which it cherishes. Indeed human life is a great theatre, where we are spectators of many evils of every kind. We see upon that stage every day (besides indigence, grief, and death) raging desires, deceived hopes, despairing fears, and devouring cares. But all these representations only inspire a terror and a pity, more capable of lowering than of strengthening the human heart. Let us say what we will, we are not comforted in our misery by the

* ——— ——— ——— ——— ——— neque ille

Aut doluit miserans in opem aut invidet habenti.

Georg. Lib. II. v. 498.

The rich he envies not their ill-gain'd store,
Nor feels he pity for the helpless poor.

fight.

sight of miserable objects. Besides that every man takes as much care as he can to avoid a view of wretchedness, that he may enjoy the sweets of life with more tranquillity, or that he may render himself pitiless and insensible of the miseries of his fellow creatures: forgetting that he is man, and so are every one of them: and that by long sorrow he must pay dearly for his short joys.

What then is to be done to caution man against inevitable evils? How shall he be rendered as sensible of them as he ought to be? How is he to be fortified against that abjection of mind into which fear and pity throw him? It is to be done, by presenting to him an enlivening representation even of his miseries. Draw his attention even against his will, by such pleasurable inticements that he cannot resist. Insinuate into his heart the agreeable and the soft parts which are contained in the passions of fear and pity; not only to render him humane, but again to teach him how to moderate his passions, when more passions shall come to be excited by real misfortunes. For when we are tamed by the idea of evils, we can fortify ourselves against them, and we are the readier to comfort others, in hopes of meeting from them a return. By this means poetry procures two considerable advantages to humanity. One is, that it softens the manners of men, as they have been softened by Orpheus, Linus, and Homer. The other is, that it renders the sensibility of mankind rational, and confines it within proper bounds; points that have been effected by the tragic Grecian poets*.

Perhaps I may be told, that it is not credible that these reflexions should have passed in the mind of Homer and of Eschylus,

* I have treated this subject in a Latin poem of twelve cantos upon the passions.

Aristotle, (says Mr. Dacier in his remarks on the sixth chapter of the Art of Poetry) is not the only one who has had the idea of tragedy. The emperor Marcus Aurelius, all stoic as he was, has judged, like Aristotle, in the 11th article of the eleventh book of his reflexions. His words are remarkable: "Tragedies, says he, were first introduced to make men remember the accidents

" that happen in life: to advertise them
" that those accidents must necessarily hap-
" pen: and to shew them that what appears
" an amusement in scenery, ought not to
" appear an insupportable torment upon the
" great theatre of the world. For thou
" seest that such ought to be the cata-
" strophe of all those pieces; and that all
" those who cry so much upon the stage,
" O *Cytheron*, do not therefore free them-
" selves from their misfortunes."

at the time when one began to compose his Iliad, the other his Tragedies: that those ideas appear additional, and are come too late: that Aristotle, charmed by discovering a sufficient foundation in their works, to form the scope and art of Epopea and Tragedy, has put to the account of those authors things, which to all appearance, they never dreamt of: and lastly, that I myself struggle in vain to lend them designs which they never had. But is it possible to believe, that these great men worked without design? I have already said, that Homer did not; and I ought to say the same of the tragic poets his imitators. If it is true, that in effect the tragic art results from their works, shall we refuse them the merit of having placed that art in those works? And must we ravish from them the honour of being able to think what we have thought but after them, and by them?

But I will suppose, that these authors did not carry in their minds the reflexions so analysed as they have been since. It cannot reasonably be denied, that they did not form the plan and the substance, which they gradually unfolded, as they perceived their entertainments to carry good or bad success: for in those times, not content to study Nature as she appeared within their own hearts, they judged of what ought to please by what in effect did please; and, that they might follow nature more closely, conformed themselves to the taste of the people, in the same manner as a skilful and judicious sculptor studies the antique which has pleased, in order to approach nearer to what is truly beautiful, which ought to please.

I will go still farther, and I will suppose, that Eschylus did not all on a sudden know that tragedy was to correct both fear and pity by their own effects; at least, it ought to be granted, that, since he has tried to excite those passions in his pieces, he intended to entertain his spectators by the imitation of fear and pity; and consequently that he perceived the value of those passions when represented. If he would not instruct, he has pretended to please. And could he possibly devise two more effectual methods to succeed? These passions only, to examine them nearly, put into play all the other motions of the soul. They are the invisible

knot *, and the all-powerful jurisdiction. The commerce is so strict between them and the other passions, that the latter are awakened by them, and waken them in their turn. We desire, we hope, we love, we hate, through fear, and fear also gives rise to desire, hope, hatred, and love. In one word, fear, and pity, which almost always accompanies it, are the first fruits of self-love, because they have for their direct object the present evil which we wish to avoid above all things. But what renders those two passions still more agreeable in plays, is, that their particular talent is to fill the soul during the action, with that majestic sorrow which is not produced either by love, hatred, or admiration, and in which the sentiment is more delicate than all those which give rise to other passions inspired by a plain representation. The tears which we shed for the fate of Andromache or Iphigenia, purely from fear and pity, are softer sensations than the sentiment of indignation and resentment with which the dying Cleopatra in Rodogune so nobly inspires us.

In short, Eschylus has been of opinion, that tragedy ought to feed upon the passions, as the epic poem does, but in a different manner; that is to say, with a lively and more animated air, in proportion to the difference which should be sustained between the duration of the one and the other, between a book and a play. He has represented Epopea as an imperial queen seated on her throne, whose clouded forehead lets us discover vast projects and strange revolutions. On the other hand, he has figured Tragedy bathed in tears, and with a dagger in her hand, such as she is now represented, accompanied by Terror and Compassion, preceded by Despair, and immediately followed by Sorrow and Mourning.

Tragic action,
and its quali-
ties.

VIII. But to excite these sensations, interests, changes of fortune, rewards, intrigues, are necessary; and all this supposes one or more actions. Now Homer, guided by reason, has chose one single action, which he has pursued through four and twenty cantos of considerable length. Reason goes still farther, and directs, that

* *Nœud d'une piece de theatre*, signifies the intricate part of the plot of the play.

there

there should be only one action in an entertainment of a few hours. The Iliad and good sense ought, by the same motive, to have determined Eschylus to chuse for the subject of a tragedy, one great action, in itself illustrious and interesting. An action perfect and entire, where the parts made a whole. A single action without a mixture of independent actions. An action which contained one single truth, hid in a circle of events united one to the other, and all tending at once to demonstrate the plot to the understanding, in proportion as they shewed it to the eyes. It is easy to see that tragedy is only the epic poem abridged. For the action, the chain of events, the fable (as Aristotle calls it) have in Homer that unity, that simplicity, that nobleness, that interest, that whole, that connection, that innocence, that perfection; in short, all those qualities which the Grecians took care to introduce into their plays.

IX. The authors after Homer imagined that his Iliad was, if I may make use of the expression, nothing more than the carcass of a tragedy. The order and proportion of the parts appeared to them the most essential point of the Iliad, and consequently of Tragedy. In effect, since the epic poem makes an accomplished body, with its just proportions, and therefore is conformable to nature, it was absolutely necessary to render the tragic entertainments agreeable, by making that order and that plan glide through them. To this end the true duration of tragedy was to be established, but in a more exact manner than had been executed by Homer in his Iliad, or his Odyssy. A poem that is to be read, may more or less prolong or shorten the duration of its action, without any rule, provided that the whole length is not too considerable, or too little. An epic poem is a building, of which, after having examined the parts and particulars, we ought to see the dimensions by the glance of an eye. The largeness or the smallness of the building is of no consequence, if the edifice be well proportioned. This is the rule of nature, such as Homer has pursued, and such as I have defined it. Nor do I believe that it can reasonably be run into other definitions. But an action upon the stage is very different. It is an-

The duration
of the tragic
action.

other kind of building, of which the extent ought to be much less than of the former. But still the size must be determined, that the spectator may not be tired by looking at it without rest or interruption. It is natural, therefore, that the measure of the action should not be much longer than the time of the representation. Such is the rule of good sense, which reflexion taught to Eschylus, and still more clearly to his successors, by considering, that an action represented ought essentially to resemble the action which it represents. Otherwise, imitation, errors, appearances of truth, and consequently all enchantments, are at an end.

As this resemblance cannot always be so perfect, that it shall not admit some difference in favour of the beauties of art, art itself may sometimes illude the spectator in favour of those beauties, and may succeed in shewing him an action, of which the duration may require eight or ten hours, though the play does not employ more upon it than two or three. This effect arises from the impatience of the spectator, who taking delight in seeing the consequences of an interesting action, helps to deceive himself, and to suppose that the necessary time slides away, or that what required a considerable time can be performed in a less. He does not attempt to quarrel with himself, and he yields so naturally to his mistake, if art assists that mistake ever so little, that a great number of reflexions would be necessary to draw him out of it, so ingenious is his impatience to seduce itself. Thus artifice joined to nature justifies the conduct of the first tragic poets, who have not very far exceeded the continuance of the representation, in the space of time which they have given to their tragedies.

It is a very remarkable thing, that Eschylus found out this happy secret, and that he and his successors conformed to it, while our French tragedies (I speak of the infancy of our theatre), and the Spaniards even to this day, know not any other unity, but that of one and the same personage, who is born and grown old in one day. I say nothing of those pieces, even the very finest, that reign in our scenes. I shall observe hereafter, that regular as they appear to be, they are far distant from the regularity of the Greeks. It has been a subject for wonder, that, in the several changes of the theatre,

theatre, we were so late in confining ourselves to those three unities, *action*, *time*, and *place*. How great was the merit of Eschylus in having discovered them ! Had he no other merit, that alone would be sufficient to render him venerable.

X. I come, therefore, by degrees to the unity of place. Eschylus has not taken that from Homer. Homer has directed him for the unity of action, and even for the unity of time, although this last, is, as we see, very different in tragedy to what it is in an epic poem. But nature only, which Eschylus in his views of Homer studied, could have made him perceive, that the spectators being placed in a pit *, or in a circus, it was necessary that the action, to make it carry the resemblance of truth, should pass under their eyes, consequently in one and the same place. Homer being but a narrator, might make the narration take voyages without his heroes, and might change the scene without carrying his readers into another country. Nothing had been more easy to the tragic poets, and to Eschylus, who was their model, than to follow a hero sometimes into the closet, where he planned his enterprises, and sometimes into the plain, where he fought his battles. But would that have been in nature ? Certainly not. The spectator may help to deceive himself upon the duration of an action, be it more or less : provided that that action does not go beyond certain bounds, and that the intervals are dextrously managed ; but he cannot deceive himself so grossly in the scenery part, as to imagine that it passes from a palace to a plain, and from one city to another, while he sees himself shut up in a bounded situation. The change of the decorations at the call of a whistle, is a puerility which good sense disavows, and which cannot be rendered tolerable, except in a representation of the magic of fairies, who are supposed capable of changing on the same spot, cottages into palaces, and cities into deserts. Art itself cannot go so far as to seduce the spectator either in the greater or less extent of the scene. It is necessary that the scene should appear, and consequently that

* Un Parterre.

it should be bounded, not in general within the circumference of a city, a camp, a palace, but in a limited part of a palace, of a city, or of a camp. The thing is so natural, that methinks we ought immediately to have discovered it in our own days, or at least to have recollected that it was already invented by the Grecians. Yet we see, that in the last age, an infinite number of learned men, and many long discourses were necessary to shew, that this exact union was absolutely requisite: nor would Corneille ever entirely submit to it. Must this happy discovery of Eschylus be, for that reason, looked upon as a trifle? That would be wrong. It is the egg of Christopher Columbus. It was said to him, "Nothing was easier than the discovery of America." "And what, answered he, is easier than to make an egg stand upon its end?" at the same time breaking the end of it, "Yet you, none of you, have done it, and I am the first who made the discovery." Every thing that is natural appears easy, when once it is found out. The difficulty is to be the inventor.

The division
of tragedy.

XI. Eschylus has been the inventor of two things which I have mentioned: and we see with what skill he has brought them to light from Homer. He has drawn likewise from thence the natural manner of dividing the theatrical composition. In effect an action cannot be told, nor played, without having what is called *exposition*, *plot*, and *discovery*. Aristotle calls these three parts the *prologue*, the *episode*, the *end*. The dramatic Greek authors call them *protafsis**, and the *catastrophe*. But we are not here to inquire about Aristotle, or the nominal terms. I only treat of the most intelligible, without putting on the air of a Grecian. That will amount to the same thing: and in regard to Aristotle, it is not our present business to see what he has remarked after Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. I shall only examine what those poets have invented after Homer. The three parts of which I am speaking, find themselves clearly placed in the Iliad. The subject begins to be unravelled by the prayers of Chryseis (after he is first repulsed, and

* The first part of a play.

then

then heard), and from the quatrel of Agamemnon with Achilles : the circumstances of which arise naturally from what has preceded. These circumstances give rise to great events which compose the knot, and which is untied by the death of Patroclus : an event that rouses Achilles to revenge himself on the Trojans, and in some measure to be reconciled to the Greeks. But the artifice of these three parts is a thing to which the inventors of tragedy ought to be extremely attentive. In effect, the exposition of the subject, which is the first point, requires great qualities to please, were they only brevity and clearness.

*" Let the entry of a well prepared piece plainly point out the subject in the first lines. I laugh when I see an actor slowly attempt to express himself he knows not how. I am fatigued, instead of being diverted, by a wretched attempt to discover a dull theatrical plot. The subject cannot be explained too soon *."*

Numberless of our best tragedies offend extremely in this point. The introductions are sometimes so embarrassed, and the roads so rugged, that we appear to be clambering up a steep rock, in order to arrive at a fine country-seat. Walks of trees, with a gentle descent, are requisite to such an approach, not floods and mountains.

Nature, besides that brevity and clearness with which she inspired the Greeks, in the exposition of their subjects, taught them also, that the opening ought in general to shew the whole action when once begun to such a degree, that the end of it should seem approaching, while, on the contrary, the single incident which in appearance was conducive to the end, should have no other effect than to retard it ; and to deceive the expectation of the surprised spectator. This may be compared to a vast temple, of which the architecture is perfectly well proportioned. The exactness of the proportion occasions the building to look less than it is. We see the space from one end to the other, and it appears but short, although it is very long. But the more we advance, the more we perceive the immense interval which the proportion had abridged.

* See Despreaux's Art of Poetry, Canto 3. A prose translation may perhaps more fully express Boileau's sentiment, than one in verse.

to our eye. It is like the false Ithaca, which was always flying before Ulysses, when he thought himself upon the point of landing in it. Good sense taught the Greeks, at least taught some of them, that the opening of the scene by no means should discover the whole plan of the action, but only should let a part of it be seen, to render the pleasure of the evolution more touching and new.

There are certain facts preceding the action, with which it would be wrong to let the spectator remain unacquainted. They are in the district of the exposition. There are of them which even belong to the body of the work, and for which some preparation must be made. The exposition will point out those. The exposition must also artfully discover to the spectator the place where the scene passes, the time when it commences, the actors who play, and who ought to play. These are things in which the spectator would have been perfectly instructed, if the real action had passed before his eyes, but they are things which he cannot know if care is not taken to reveal them to him. The poet must not appear to bear any part in the discovery. The poet speaks not, he ought to be forgotten; otherwise the play would be an epic poem. It is the right of the actors only to speak and to act. But how great is that art, to make actors speak things that appear like exact truth, and seem only said for the actor, and yet are solely intended for the spectator? Of the three Greek poets, Sophocles is the only one by whom that art was well known. Eschylus has made a rough draught of it, and Euripides has often neglected it in his expositions. He thought an actor could not discover too soon who he is, and what is the part he is to act. He liked better,

That each Tragedian instantly should cry,
I am Orestes, Agamemnon I:
Nor did he wish by nice dramatic art
To touch the ears, but not engage the heart*.

To avoid this defect, we † have invented trusty associates ‡. They are of great use in the exposition of the subject, and to in-

* See Despreaux's Art of Poetry, Canto 3.

† The Moderns.

‡ *Les Confidens.*

frustrate the spectator in things which cannot be represented to his view. But as these personages have no other part in the action, than to receive the secrets of their sovereigns, it must be allowed that their appearance is cold. The chorus of the antients, which resembles in some measure the manner of these associates, is much more interesting. We will talk of the chorusses in another place. By what I have said, I content myself by remarking the exact difference between the expositions of an epic poem, and the exposition of tragedies, that we may perfectly distinguish what Eschylus and the Grecian tragic writers have borrowed from the Iliad, and what they have changed with regard to the exposition of the subject. Homer was not constrained in his works. He was only a narrator. But the tragic writers have been obliged to rectify that art *, to adjust it to tragedy. It must be a masterly hand to bring a subject finely upon the theatre; whereas a beautiful simplicity is only wanted (indeed it is sometimes rare), to begin an epic poem. It was therefore a considerable effort of genius in Eschylus, to have been the first in perceiving the difference between the epic and the tragic, and to make the one give rise to the other with so much art, that the scholar excels his master.

XII. After this effort, Eschylus found his difficulty less in The plot. transporting the Epopea to tragedy. This is what is called the plot, or the knot. For we are more easily induced to forget the poet or narrator, as soon as we are embroiled in different interests, and engaged in the parts acted by divers personages, than when we are brought as spectators to the end of an action in which we appear to hear no part, and when we cannot perceive the drift of that action. But the plot is the most considerable part of the tragedy. The plot gives that kind of liveliness which animates. It has the same effect in an epic poem. The Grecian poets, full of the genius of Homer, most assuredly found in him that just poise of reasons, motions, interests, and passions, which holds the scenes suspended, and which sharpens the curiosity of the auditors to the

end of the play. For Homer, as we have already perceived, being author of the great resources, raises kings against kings, people against people, gods against gods. Destiny holds, maintains, and breaks the equilibrium at pleasure, in favour of the one side or the other, but almost always to the detriment of the Greeks: and the anger of Achilles, which appears rather indolent, is the soul of all the agitations and tempests. The counterpoize of the intrigue balances turn by turn the terror and the compassion that arise in the heart of those who are either readers or auditors. We read nothing, we hear nothing, we become witnesses of the renowned events. The mind raised, transported, ravished out of itself, partakes of all the dangers of the Greeks and Trojans. Such is the effect which the plot of a tragedy ought to produce: an effect, however, which continues more quick and lively, as the perturbation of our mind ought not to last long. Hence it follows, that to consult nature in the manner Eschylus has done, the tragic plot ought to be less intricate, less burdened, but more lively conducted than the epic. We shall see hereafter, how far * we have rambl'd from the ancient simplicity, by neglecting this rule: and by giving often more matter to our tragedies, than even long heroic poems would require. In going forward, let us observe the true character which ought to distinguish the latter from the former. The ancients have made that distinction. In other points it is a character founded upon the idea of the play, which (requiring a short time for the evolutions of its events) ought to be lively and simple, in order to be agreeable.

Upon this principle the art of varying, even to a degree of infinity, the motions that govern the theatrical balance, presents itself voluntarily to our minds. Two or three incidents are sufficient to produce great effects, without heaping together, as is frequently done, a number of machines that rather point out dearth than plenty. An injury revenged in the *Cid* †, has produced this

* The French dramatic authors.

† This relates to a particular story. The *Cid* is one of Corneille's tragedies, written under the disadvantage of the bad taste and bitter enmity of cardinal Richlieu. The

best explanation of this hint in Monsieur Brumoy will be found in the twenty-ninth chapter of Monsieur Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV.* where great justice is done to the character of Corneille.

master-piece of intrigue, which the rebellious public, as Despreaux says, has always stubbornly admired, notwithstanding a powerful cabal against it, some specious arguments, and numberless defects. Taste, assisted by good sense, and the example of Homer, is the surest rule in what manner to increase the confusion from scene to scene, and from act to act. But the beauty of the plot depends upon the choice of the action, and that action is oftner the effect of good luck than of judgment. History and fable both furnish interesting subjects, but fewer in number than one could imagine: but it is from thence we are to draw our plans, if they are to be rendered credible. A subject of pure imagination would prepossess the incredulity of the spectator, and would hinder him from suffering himself to be willingly deluded. Those slight alterations, which a spectator cannot perceive, are the only liberties which he will allow the poet to take: and which indeed the poet only ought to take in the artifice of his plot. His skill must consist in inventing situations of great delicacy, where a father finds himself complicated in difficulties with his children, the lover with the person loved, interest jarring with friendship, honour with love. The more the decision is embarrassing, the more troubles on every side encrease. The action is always tending to its end, without permitting any conjecture of what will be the issue, and it often is terminated in a manner very different from what was expected *.

In a word, the plot is a Dedalian labyrinth, which goes on and always returns upon itself: where we are delighted, and yet are trying to go out: where we are proceeding forward, with pleasure, when a false path, that should conduct us on, drives us back. To effect this, the thread that leads the unsuspecting spectator should, in reality, be so loose, that he cannot feel it. When art is once

* Monsieur Brumoy has here again given another quotation from Boileau, which seems rather better fitted for a note, than for the situation that it fills in the original. I shall take the liberty of translating it into prose, and refer my reader to the third canto of Monsieur Despreaux's Art of Poetry, as before,

"The mind never finds itself more lively touched, then when the truth of an intricate subject, which has been enve-
"loped in secrecy, is suddenly made
"known, and changes all by giving an un-
"foreseen turn to every thing."

discovered, every art is driven away. It is by the violent concussion of the passions, that we are enabled to hide the appearance of art. This was taught by Homer to the Greeks. In their works, the passions roll, dash against each other, overturn each other, and continually return upon themselves, like the waves of the sea, which are to be justly compared at the end of a tempest, to the discovery of a tragic plot.

The discovery of the plot.

XIII. The discovery of a plot, another invention copied by the Greeks after Homer, determines the intricacy, and by little and little, or all at once, disentangles the intrigue, after it has been carried as far as it can be carried. Nature will have it so. The impatience of the human mind runs eagerly to the end. Animated by the concurrence of different projects and of divers passions which are mingled in the representation, we await the hand that is to untie the Gordian knot. We want to look upon the whole object: therefore, when the author has found means to awaken curiosity, he must satisfy it by a discovery conformable to the expectation raised. For this, there are many methods, all which depend upon the nature of the theatrical scenes.

Either the hero of the piece, already unfortunate, arrives insensibly at the completion of wretchedness, like Phædra and Hippolytus:

Or he passes from happiness to misery, like Oedipus:

Or, in short, he may rise from the depth of calamity to an happy fortune, like Nicomedes.

Farther, an action may be disposed in such a manner, that of two sort of personages, the one criminal, the other virtuous, they each may reverse the balance. The reward due to virtue, may, in the end, be given to vice, that of vice to virtue; or the latter may be punished, and the former recompensed.

I am of opinion, that, in this last case, we may call the action compound. In the three first, it may be termed simple. Aristotle often puts no other difference between simple and compound actions, than that the former displays neither any unexpected chance,

nor

nor any change of state, nor any *sudden or surprising recollection**, but only one uniform transition from a tempest to a calm. Such is the Philoctetes of Sophocles; whereas others, particularly † Alcestes, and the second Iphigenia of Euripides, have *recollection* ‡ and change of state, or at least one of these events. Let it be how it will, in regard to the simplicity, or the composition of tragic compositions, according to the idea of philosophy, it is certain that they all may be reduced to the four kinds which I have already mentioned, and which consequently give rise to four sorts of discoveries. For if the hero already supposed unfortunate, falls insensibly into the greatest depth of wretchedness, the discovery overthrows all hopes that flattered him of being disentangled, and plunges him into immediate or encreasing misery, without possibility of return. If the action tends to render a man unhappy, who has been loaded with glory and honour, the discovery tends to destroy all his grandeur by the very means that appear to confirm it. If it is thought proper to draw an unfortunate person out of his misfortunes, the discovery will do it by a return of events, that produce an entire contrary event to what they promised. Lastly, if at the same time the guilty are to be punished, and the innocent saved, the discovery effects a double operation, as in the two preceding cases. The discovery is to be understood only as a passage which leads either to trouble or to tranquility, or from one state to another, either of happiness or misery. It may be reduced, therefore, to these two sorts ||, whether they are brought about by a surprising *recollection*, or otherwise.

* *Ni reconnaissance.* The word *reconnaissance*, verbally translated, is here rendered *recollection*. The word alone cannot give the full latitude of its meaning. The signification of it must be, a sudden and surprising recollection of a person whom we either suppose dead, or whom we had forgotten, or whom we have mistaken for another. This sort of recollection, when masterly represented, as by Sir Richard Steele in his *Concious Lovers*, by Shakespeare in his *Winter's Tale*, and by many other dramatic authors,

is of great importance, and a most material point in the drama.

† See the scene between Hercules, Admetus, and a woman veiled, in the fifth act of *Alcestes*, as translated by Monsieur Brumoy.

‡ I have here kept entirely close to the original, and rendered it, by the single word *recollection*, that the reader may judge of the meaning which ought to be attached to it.

|| Happiness or misery, in one of which states all plays should end.

Eschylus must have observed, that the Iliad unravels itself by an event which removes all obstacles that opposed the reconciliation between Achilles and the Greeks. That event is the death of Patroclus, which draws on that of Hector, whose funeral terminates the action. He must also have seen, that the discovery in the Odyssey is the return of Ulysses, and the recollection of him after the slaughter of Penelope's lovers. It is on one side this recollection, and on the other this event, which gave the ideas to the tragic poets, of introducing into their plays the kind of discovery which appears in the epic poem, as they have also conveyed into their works the exposition and the plot. The resemblance is too striking to allow the least doubt: and we plainly see, that their intrigues are unravelled, and not from their own, but from Homer's invention; either an incident entirely new, or *a sudden recollection and acknowledgment of a person supposed lost or dead* *.

But the art to render the discoveries happy and natural, has been brought to perfection, by studying the tragic genius. The masters of that art in searching into it have found, that a discovery of the plot cannot be conformable to reason, if it does not arise from the ground-work of the subject itself; and that has induced Horace to condemn the introduction of gods brought in machines, unless the plot is of such a nature as to admit of no other method to unravel it. For example, we see, that a tragedy upon the sacrifice of Isaac cannot end without an engine, that is to say, a voice issuing from heaven: because it is not permitted, that in a known history any essential part should be changed, especially in the scripture, and where the character deserved such a kind of event. But that the discovery may seem to come to light from the subject itself, the preparation of it must not be hindered by prevention, the foundation of it must be laid without a possibility of guessing them, nor ought it to be in the power of any person to say he had seen them before the whole appeared entire. In a word, the end must be managed as the other incidents of the piece, with so just an attach-

* Here I have again endeavoured to explain at full length the French word *une reconnaissance*, so often made use of by Monsieur Brumoy.

ment to the rest of the body, that it shall be confessed an impossibility to have finished it in any other manner, without spoiling the work. The master-piece of all discoveries is, without doubt, the Oedipus of Sophocles. It begins with the knot itself, and continues to tie in such a manner what it unties, that the fate of Oedipus is more embroiled, the more it is discovered; and is not at last cleared up, till by a single word (like a peircing ray, striking light into the soul of Oedipus) his eyes are entirely opened, and it is made known to him, that he is the murderer of his father, and the husband of his mother.

Besides this attachment, and this connection with the plot, the discovery must have another no less necessary quality: that is, a certain equity which awakens in us the natural love which we bear to justice. The ancients knew this, and practised it. It is from thence that we have punished vice, and made virtue triumphant: But their conduct has been admirable, by always producing it in such a manner, that far from diminishing the pleasures arising from terror and pity, they have encreased them. What would be extraordinary in representing a scene, where a villain became unhappy? or irreproachable virtue meeting with its due reward? Such a scene could excite no lively passion. But to bring before the spectator a person little blameable, and very unfortunate, there lies the great secret of fear and compassion. His misfortunes touch us. His pain moves us. But the comparison of his virtues, his faults, and his misfortunes, are affective, by turning us into ourselves; and we feel, at the end of the play, all that the two tragic passions can inspire, of vivacity and tenderness.

I well know that it is not singly from Homer that Eschylus has taken these observations, since the unravelling the Iliad and the Odyssey rather causes admiration full of joy, than produces the effects of fear, and the satisfaction of pity. But Eschylus, and his successors, have too plainly perceived the difference between the epic and the tragic, not to join their own particular reflexions to those of Homer. We therefore sufficiently see how the first lineaments of the theatre have been traced by Homer, and imitated by Eschylus. It rests, then, upon me to shew in what manner the latter
has

has filled up the first outlines of tragedy upon the model of the Iliad so skilfully, that the daughter, at the same time that she preserves a good deal of her mother's air, maintains her own personal air and dignity *.

The person-
ages.

XIV. Eschylus, after having discerned in the epic poem the idea, the end, the exposition, the plot, and the discovery of a dramatic entertainment, saw evidently, that in a parallel enterprize, supposing the interlocutors in presence of an assembly, it must be necessary to examine what was fit in regard to the personages and their manners, the diction and its ornaments, the theatre and its decorations. And, to begin by the personages. He observed, that the chief actors ought to appear illustrious; for in Homer it is Agamemnon, Menelaus, Achilles, Ulysses, the two Ajaxes, that play the principal parts. Those are heroes for heroic actions. But we see also a Thersites, and personages of an inferior order, put in contrast with those of the first rank. And we see armies and multitudes of the populace, placed in the deepnings, and sometimes in the ground of the picture. All these personages were introduced upon the stage. And besides the gods, we see princes and kings contesting among themselves for the interest of the state, so far as to lose for it their crown and life. To a commonwealth † jealous of her liberty, it was right to display misfortunes that became more interesting, as they flattered the proud compassion of republicans, and incited in their heart nothing but a majestic and noble terror at the sight of crowned heads, seemingly sacrificed for the republic. The heroes in Homer, therefore, were raised from the dead, and appeared again in tragic situations, because it was proposed to please the Greeks, whose ears delighted to hear the august names of so many great men of their own nation. To these principal characters were added some less lofty, as subalterns,

* Whoever is able to form a good judgment upon tragedy, and to know confidently, whether it is good or bad, may also very well judge of an Epopea [epic poem]; for all the parts of the Epopea are to be found

in tragedy, but all those of tragedy are not to be found in the Epopea.—Aristotle's Art of Poetry, translated by Monsieur Dacier.

† Greece.

who by that means might give more lustre, flights of passion, and room for play to the others. Such parts as were not seen were made known to the spectators by the narration of these lower actors, who animated the theatre, by telling news little expected, by bringing about unforeseen discoveries *, and by the assistance which they gave to the more considerable actors. The interposition and the administration of the gods entered thus into the exposition, the plot, and the unravelling of the play.

XV. The chorusses, heretofore totally employed to sing Bacchus, or some such subject, sung no more now except in certain intervals, to relieve the spectator, and to give room for the course of the intrigue. Indolent as they were, they became active, sometimes as nymphs, sometimes furies, sometimes as courtiers, often as the people, but always interested in the action. After the time of Homer, it was judged that a great and illustrious action could not pass without witnesses; besides, that those witnesses were a magnificent ornament to a representation, and afforded greater pleasure to the eyes than to the ears. As the chorus was found out, and alone, or almost alone, composed what was called tragedy before the time of Eschylus, this poet did not exclude it from the true tragedy. On the contrary, he thought he ought to incorporate it as a chorus to sing between the acts, and as a personage mixed with the action. He judged only, that it was proper to abridge the songs: they being, in his idea, no more than an additional refreshment. In this manner he first began. For, in regard to the number of persons who composed the chorus (the number amounted to fifty), he did not retrench them, nor did he reduce them to fifteen till some time had past, and then only by order of the magistrates, from the terrible effect of his *Eumenides*, of which I shall speak hereafter. He therefore made a double use of the chorus. The Choryphœus, that is, the principal person who conducted the chorus in the action, entered at the head of the rest, in the name of whom he replied, either to give useful counsel, or salutary in-

The Choruses.

Reconnoissances.

structions, or to take the part of innocence and virtue, or to be the depositary of secrets, and to avenge the cause of despised religion, or, in short, to sustain, as Horace says *, all these characters together. The chorus, properly speaking, was the man of honour of the piece.

As to the other part of his function, which consisted in his singing in the intervals, he acquitted himself as before, by a mixture of walking, in grave and majestic steps, to the sound of all the voices united, with this difference, that since the invention of true tragedy, or even to the time of Thespis, the chorus sung nothing that did not appertain to the whole. To prepare for approaching events, the chorus by desires and fears expressed his own sentiments, or the sentiments of the spectators. And thus, without ceasing entirely from being what he had been, he changed the manner of his songs, and became only one part of the whole.

Some persons have been of opinion (and the theatre of our days is a speaking proof for them), that the chorus was absolutely useless. They have even thought, that the first inventors of tragedy would not have admitted them in that new kind of entertainment, but from respect to their antiquity. Such a reason is too puerile to have been the motives of those great geniuses, who devised the means of substituting tragedy in the place of an entertainment so little resembling it before their time. Most assuredly, if the chorus had not appeared to them a necessary assistance towards the perfection of their art, they would have rejected it with the same ease that they put bounds to the employment. I know that it has its inconveniencies, and that it has sometimes thrown the antients into faults, particularly against probability; but we may see, by the use which they generally made of it, that the advantages are infinitely superior to the inconveniencies. Sophocles knew how to escape some moments from his chorus, when he found it necessary: as he has done in his Ajax. The poet, therefore, must lay the blame upon himself, when the chorus incommodes or puts him into shackles. On the other hand, what advantages may he not

* See Horace's Art of Poetry, v. 193. *Let the chorus sustain the part and manly office of an actor.*

draw from a troop of actors, who fill the scene, and render the continuation of the action more affecting, and indeed make it more probable, as it is not natural that it should pass without witnesses. We feel but too plainly the emptiness of our stage without chorusses; and the happy trial which Monsieur Racine made to revive them in his *Athalie* and *Esther*, ought, I think, to have undeceived us in that article. But behold the force of custom. The spectator was used, at the beginning of theatres, to pieces represented with chorusses; and they pleased. It was afterwards a merit to set them aside, and at this day it would be a scrupulous difficulty to attempt to recover them. Such is the genius of mankind. It is certainly a most considerable loss; because the chorus would fill the void of the theatre, in the same manner that the harpsicord fills the void of music in concerts. I speak not of that kind of probability which is striking, nor of the nature of those plays which from that very circumstance draws us away. Neither of those articles are now of any consequence. Our reflexions are no longer in that channel. I say not this to justify the antients, or to put the merit of their theatre in balance with ours. I speak, because it is unjust to condemn their chorusses, from no other motive than because we do not think proper to make use of them, as if in the works of genius nothing was estimable but what was authorized by our customs, and our manner of thinking.

The chorusses danced and sung as before the time of *Thespis*. It will be proper to explain how, as far as it can be done. They arranged themselves in the same manner as when there were fifteen actors. They appeared in three ranks, five in each rank; or in five, three in each rank: and so again in proportion, when they were reduced to twelve: then the arrangement turned upon the numbers of three and four. They made divers evolutions, and assumed different airs either of joy or sorrow, as their guide, that is, the *Choryphæus*, directed them.

The common movement was very mysterious, and came from the same kind of superstition that reigns at this day among the Turks, which consists in imitating the heavens and the stars, and whirling round like them. The chorus went from the right to

LX A DISCOURSE UPON THE

the left, to represent the daily course of the firmament from the east to the west. This rotation was called *Strophe*. Afterwards the turn was taken from the left to the right, in regard to the planets, which, besides their common motion, have their own particular movements from the west to east. This was the *Antistrophe*, or the return. The Latins, and also the French, have retained these names, to signify the course in their odes, because odes originally were adapted to songs and dances. Lastly, the chorus stopt in the middle of the theatre, to sing there a piece which was named the *Epode*, and to mark by their situation the stability of the earth. It is probable that these evolutions, accompanied by songs and dances, which it is difficult to figure to our eyes, varied themselves upon the theatre into a thousand different forms, in the same manner as was practised in diversions of play*. We know that Theseus established one which represented to the sight, by means of dances, the labyrinth from whence he had had the good fortune to escape. Although it may be difficult enough to give a clear idea of these marches and counter-marches, yet we may, by our own performances, easily comprehend, that they were much varied, and very agreeable, upon the vast theatres of a most polite republic, where nothing was ever spared towards the approbation and splendour of representations.

Too philosophical a genius might object here, that the Greeks could not have drawn from nature the manner which they practised in their tragic dances and music. But this objection vanishes of itself, as soon as we reflect that a dance is only a more graceful manner of going, and music a more agreeable manner of speaking. Now all imitation consists in imitating nature so as to please. If we condemn the use of music and dances, we may as well blame the use of verse, which is only language put into exact measure. It has ever been agreed by men of all ages, that imitation being formed to give pleasure, was much more graceful when the thoughts were explained in verse. The same holds good in proportion with regard to music and dancing, with this restriction,

* *Dans les jeux.*

that

that neither one nor the other can be employed with any sort of probability in representing a continued and entire action, when poetry on the other hand can effect it, and effect it without offending the spectators. What is the cause of this? It is because poetry, slightly striking our ears, the organs of which are less lively than our eyes, we insensibly forget that the actors speak in verse. We look upon the language of poetry as the language of the gods: or supposing any particular attention paid to poetry, the auditors profit by it; they are more touched by the harmony of verse than of prose, and are too little struck by the cadence to be offended at it. But dances, if employed to express all the situations of the actors in one continued piece, would be extremely shocking. As for music, it partakes both of poetry and dancing: for, though music only strikes the ears, it still seizes the senses more powerfully than poetry, but much less than dancing. Dances, by being attached to music, they together command two of our senses, hearing and sight: from hence it happens, that though we hear the opera, yet it is with some difficulty we hear certain parts of it, that seem more proper to be declaimed than sung. What would be the consequences, if dance also claimed there its part? The ridicule would then be compleat. The song and the dance therefore, have their limits much more bounded than versification. But these three things are but one necessary advantage to embellish nature, and they are capable of attaining that end when rightly placed. Too exact an imitation would be shocking. What would be thought of a picture, if the painter represented the faces precisely such as they are? Or, if we saw the combat of a number of men, even of heroes, who, after all, are but men, represented precisely to our eyes such as it passed? Nothing of this would please: nay, perhaps, it would all displease. So true is it that the human mind, which searches after what is beautiful and perfect, wishes to find it by an embellished imitation. Hence comes the knot that unites art and nature. The latter furnishes the principal touches, but it is the other that embellishes them. Such are the bounds of poets, musicians, and painters. All of them are imitators, every one in his own manner; and to engage us perfectly in the public shew of a tragedy, all of them ought to

con-

contribute properly, as Eschylus has directed. Eschylus, I confess, is not in this particular the inventor; but if we run through the road that he has taken, we shall soon see not only what he invented, but also how he employed what he found ready made for him. He retained the chorusses with songs and dances, but he abridged both the one and the other, and did not make use of them but in the intervals of his pieces; convinced that his imitation would be more acceptable by this mixture; and that by means of this restriction, it would not have any thing too extravagant. However, he once in his life broke in upon these rules, and that was in his *Eumenides*, where the actors of the chorus appeared such exact furies in their imitation, that women with child suffered, and little children died by fright. The imitation was too perfect, and consequently erroneous. This, perhaps, is the reason why painted statues and German poppets cannot be relished. The latter, by their inanimate motions, the former by being motionless, equally cause fear; because their imitation is too striking. In the same manner too true a resemblance in tragedy would have the effect of a real dead body, by occasioning terror instead of giving that pleasure which is expected from art. Music and dances contribute therefore, to the pleasure of the spectator, without reckoning that they recreate him, by gently continuing the impression already begun in his soul; and to this point the ancients had a principal regard. They introduced nothing into their scenes that did not lead to the same end: and they not only knew how to accommodate their ornaments to their subjects, but still to give that admirable variety which different subjects require in the uniform stile of tragedy. It was by uniting what their ancestors had left them, with what they had invented themselves (I mean two performances * highly distinguished by their characters), that they found the secrets of forming tragedy, and of enriching it with an ornament which we have

* I presume that Monsieur Brumoy means the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Indeed he can scarce mean any other; yet his connections here, as in many other places, are not quite

clear. I have therefore put the sentence into a parenthesis, as it may very well be omitted.

thought useless, perhaps because they themselves ceased to make use of it in the last formation which they gave to comedy.

I have been a little extensive upon the chorusses, as much with a view to give a complete idea of the antient theatre, as to give an insight how the Greeks carried their endeavours of pleasing the spectator. And it is in this view, that I shall take notice hereafter of some other ornaments which are, as it were, the outworks of tragedy. Let us only recollect here what we have observed upon the personages; that is to say, that the most illustrious of the actors, as gods and kings, were always accompanied by chorusses, such as the action itself required: that to these personages, others less considerable were added, to give business to the former. That in truth all this came originally from Homer, even the chorusses, although, to consider them in regard to a Bacchanal hymn, they were perhaps more antient than his time.

XVI. The personages once invented, they were to be put into *The manners.* action, and to do that well, it was thought proper to give to every one the true features of his mind. This is what Aristotle calls *The manners.* For, in reference to the manners which distinguish each personage, he compares the action to the disposition and design of a picture. He says, the manners are like colours, which bring out the first draught of a delineated design. In effect, Eschylus must have seen in Homer, that the manners of his heroes make a most striking figure, and are equal to the effect of a fine lively complexion in a picture. But he must also have thought, that in a play the complexion of the colours shew to the eyes, the age, condition, sentiments, passions, virtues, nay, even the defects of the person painted; so in a play, where the whole speaks to the eyes and to the mind, the manners ought to be so formed, as to shine forth less by the words than the actions. Has not Homer himself done this in his epic poem? Do we not think we see Achilles in action? Do we wait for his discourse to convince us that he is passionate, inexorable, and superior to laws? By what characteristics is not this hero represented? But how much more ought his character to shine in a play, which essentially ought to be

be short and animated? This was the theatrical part undoubtedly, which the tragic authors studied most in the Iliad and Odyssey. They remarked immediately, that the manners ought to be suitable to the persons, according to the age, the situation, and the interest that induced them to enter upon action. A young man was not to act like an old man, nor a king like a subject, nor a passionate man like one neither agitated nor interested. Horace has taken delight in marking out to us a finished picture upon the difference of ages. Aristotle too is extensive upon this matter, but I find that the antient poets carried farther than either Aristotle or Horace, their reflexions on the conformity of manners: for besides the general remarks on the age, the station, and the personal interests, they have made some inimitable observations upon decorum, which indeed are a little difficult to be explained. As to age, with them, children never speak. They only appear as in the Oedipus of Sophocles, to encrease the trouble and agitation of the scene. In regard to dignity, what decency is there in our three * poets? They not only make a king speak, and conduct himself like a king, but he never appears by a representative, nor enters into foreign interests little worthy of his rank. He draws to himself the whole action, and is the soul of it. Good sense requires the same thing in painting and in poetry. However, this is a point which our best poets have not always observed. In the Cid, what a part does the king of Castile act? He is almost only an indolent witness of an action which concerns him but little. Rodriguez and Chimenes draw all the attention of the spectator, whilst the king and the infanta, who ought to have the principal part, or not to appear at all, appear indeed, but only as seconds, and consequently tiresome. Corneille perceived this afterwards very well, but he had struck the blow before he had made this important remark: a remark which had been put in practice by the Greek authors from the very birth of their theatre. Lastly, to speak of the interests which animate the actors, with what a justness of variety have not the Grecian poets traced out the different manners

* Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

adherent to the same personages in different situations. In Euripides Clytemnestra dissolved in tears, breaths forth all her fury against a barbarous husband, who has been the executioner of his daughter Iphigenia: how does that fury bear another face in the Electra, where the interest is quite different? These sorts of changes are not within the district of painting, which can only take in one single situation, and leaves all preceding and following circumstances to be conjectured. But dramatic poetry can, and ought to preserve exactly these nice differences, principally in the course of the same tragedy, according to the alteration of interests. Different is the rage of Philoctetes against the Greeks, who have abandoned him in a desert island, from the rage when he beholds Ulysses, whom he knows to be the author of his misfortunes, and by whom he falls a second time a victim to perfidy. All this does not hinder the manners from possessing another quality, which Homer and the Greek tragic writers have given them; that is, to be intirely consistent, and never to contradict themselves: for our poets observe, that Achilles appears always the same as he did in the beginning of the Iliad. To speak the truth, his anger has divers aspects, as well as the remaining parts of the character of that hero.

The two qualities, that is to say, conformity and equality, are all the art of *the manners* in tragedy: for as to what concerns the other, which Aristotle has added, they may be reduced to the two first.

Aristotle insists that the manners, most especially of the personage upon whom the whole turns, ought to be good, that is, he ought to have that common probity, which must occasion him to be pitied in his misfortunes; or some say (for the passage is equivocal), that Aristotle insists in general, that his manners be most perfectly specified. He farther insists, that these personages delineated from fable or history, do not appear contrary to the idea which fable or history has given us of them. That Ulysses, for example, should not bear the characteristic of an hero, nor Achilles of a politician. Now, this signifies no more than what he had said before, that conformity ought to be preserved in the

manners: for how could they have that conformity, if the hero of the piece was a bad man, or if his manners were not conspicuously distinguishable? Or if personages known were not represented such as they are already known to be? But not to enter into the chicanery of erudition (where it is indifferent which side is taken, because neither one nor the other convinces us of any point that we are not willing to allow) let me return to the source, Homer; where I find throughout his whole work, every thing that concerns *the manners*. So much is the dramatic poem indebted to the epopea.

The Diction.

XVII. Thus far we have seen the birth and the increase by little and little of the dramatic poem. Our business at present is, to cloath it with such diction as is proper for it. Verse appeared to Eschylus better adapted for that purpose than prose: He thought that a work which was the offspring of a poem, and was itself a poem, ought not to be expressed but in the language of the gods: no doubt because he had remarked the dignity and grandeur which Homer had given to the Iliad, by writing in verse. Nevertheless, to follow the difference which he imagined ought to be between the epic and the tragic, he persuaded himself that the iambic verse was suitable to the latter, as the heroic to the former; not only because iambic verse has a theatrical nobleness, which is much better felt than expressed; but because, by approaching nearer to prose, it preserves enough the air of poetry to flatter the ear agreeably, and not enough to introduce the poet, who ought not to be thought of in a theatrical entertainment, where others than he are supposed to speak and act.

Before Eschylus, when tragedy was as yet nothing but a simple chorus, or else a serious or burlesque recital mixt with the chorus, they made use (at least in the latter case) of tetrameters, composed of one long, and one short foot; jumping verses, as Monsieur Dacier expresses it, which were so proper for dance and satyr, that the authors of the * Atellanian pieces retained

* Interludes.

them in their chorusses. " But (adds * Aristotle) after the diction that was fit for tragedy was established, nature without the least trouble invented the kind of verse that was proper: for the iambic is of all verses the most proper for conversation, and a most certain sign of this is, that we often make use of iambic verses in speaking one to another, and very seldom of hexameters; they scarce ever come from us, unless we go beyond the bounds of ordinary discourse to change the harmony and the tone." In effect, heroic verse is more harmonious than others, upon which Monsieur Dacier makes a very judicious reflexion; that is, that our tragedies are unfortunate in having only one sort of verse, which serves at the same time for the Epopea, the Elegy, the † Idyl, the Satyr, and the ‡ Comedy. It is to no purpose to render their turn more or less simple, or more or less majestic; besides this flexibility of changing their turn is much easier to be done in the hexameter verses of the Latins and Greeks, whose cadences admit of an extreme variety. It seems to me that our language is not capable of diversifying poems of so different a taste; nor are we made amends for so many different sorts of versification which the learned languages have above us. Certainly this attention of the Greeks to find out a verse sufficiently simple to be adapted to tragedy, which, as it is only an imitation of history, ought to be very simple, shews us evidently, as Aristotle says, that they studied Nature, and that Nature herself dictated this sort of verse to their choice: instructed by the same master, they adopted for their chorusses other verses more capable of motion and song; because Poetry then ought to make a shew of her riches, and was no longer confined to one pure conversation between real actors. All this was an embellishment to the entertainment, and a relief to the spectator. Thus it has been necessary to marry the more exalted Poetry to Dance and Music. These were points to which the antients gave great attention,

* Aristotle's art of poetry, chap. 4. translated by Monsieur Dacier.

† A small pastoral poem.

‡ The French by the word *Comedie*,

mean both comedy and tragedy, as in this place, where it signifies a play or theatrical entertainment, *irez-vous à la comédie?* "Will you go to the play?"

and we give none: they almost totally disappear in all translations; and as to myself, I have been of opinion that it was not possible to give them full force, even by turning the chorusses into verse, a difficult point in other respects, and which, in the judgment of those who know a little how to manage French verse, will be deemed an impossibility to succeed in, unless at the expence of the original, or of the translator. It was, however, just to supply such a defect in this translation, by shewing how far Eschylus carried his penetration in the first tragedies that ever appeared.

Besides the versification, I still comprehend, under the name of diction, the thoughts and sentiments which are inseparable from it; because they must be cloathed with elocution as soon as they are born. Sentiments and thoughts are partly expressive of the manners, and consequently one of the articles to which the tragic poets paid a particular regard: In this, as in all the rest, Homer has served them as a guide. For how did he establish the manners of his heroes? It was by giving them thoughts and sentiments conformable to their characters: They all think and feel in the same manner as they act. Agamemnon, as a haughty king, jealous of his authority: Achilles, as a prince offended and irritated: Ulysses, as a prudent and a polite mediator. From the mixture of all these characters, results a conflict of sentiments and thoughts that by mutually encreasing themselves, form those contests so extremely proper for the dramatic scene, or those passions which are the life of it. I shall not stop myself here to follow step by step the artifice of these two things *, nor to shew how a thought or a sentiment take their rise, make their progress, and gain their encrease to the utmost height. Corneille has already made all this appear in his fine scene of Sertorius and Pompey. I shall only shew how this artifice has passed from the epic to the tragic, always with this difference, which cannot be too often repeated, namely, that tragedy ought not only to be strewed like the epopea with strong thoughts, and with sentiments elevated to the highest degree; but still it ought to be entirely nourished by the epopea: a difference

* Thoughts and Sentiments.

in effect the more remarkable, as Eschylus has taken possession of it, and his successors have followed him in the same path. A public theatrical entertainment, such as I have painted tragedy, cannot live but by great, majestic, energetic ideas, and by sentiments answerable to those ideas. Hence arise the serious, and also the lively thoughts with which the antient poets are filled: sometimes they contain undistinguished strokes, which finish a character in one or two words: sometimes they contain more extensive discourses and sentences of reason, discussion and proof: sometimes they contain the gradation of those movements, which the most animated passions produce. All this is in other respects so consonant to tragedy, that although the artifice be drawn from Homer, it seems to be the only attribute of tragedy. All I have done, is to glance lightly upon this matter. It would alone require large volumes to be brought fully into day; for it cannot be believed that the first masters, let us suppose them ever so ignorant, have gone on by accident, and have made their actors speak and think by chance. It is evident, on the contrary, that they have done what Aristotle and Horace advise: they have put themselves into the place of their actors, and into the same situations: they have asked themselves how they would act and think in such and such a conjuncture; and then they have made their own thoughts and sentiments pass into the souls of the heroes, whom they have called up from the dead, to act upon the stage the same parts which they had sustained upon the theatre of the world.

The elocution of Homer is proportioned to the sentiments and thoughts that he is desirous of expressing: it is by elocution chiefly that he becomes a real enchanter. If the form of his verses had not been transmitted to tragedy, at least the graces of his expressions, graces sometimes terrible, sometimes amiable, and almost always charming, pass into the mouths of his heroes raised from the dead, and produced upon the stage of Athens. Tragedy, by the aid of Eschylus, the first inventor of it, forthwith assumed a more pompous strain than that of the Iliad: It is the

the *magnum loqui* *, of which Horace speaks. Perhaps even Eschylus, who had always in his thoughts the magnificence of the tragic language, has carried it too far. His is not the trumpet of Homer, it is something more. His diction too fiery, too elate, and to say all at once, sometimes gigantic, seems rather to imitate the noise of drums, and the cries of warriors, than the noble harmony of trumpets. The elevation of his genius did not permit him to speak like other men. His tragic genius rather appears to sustain itself upon stilts than upon the buskin which he invented. Sophocles much better understood the true nobleness of theatrical diction: he came nearer in imitating the stile of Homer. In his stile he mixed, besides the sweetness of honey, (which caused him to be called a bee) sufficient solemnity, to give to tragedy the air of a matron obliged to appear in public with dignity, as Horace † says. Euripides took a stile, which, though noble, was not estranged from common sense; and he seemed to delight more in giving it tenderness and elegance than force and grandeur. The others who followed him, and who cite Aristotle, probably formed each of them their own stile agreeable to their genius: But the Grecian tragedy, from the time of Eschylus to the time of its own decay, supported itself by a manner of writing adapted for it, though diversified by the several pens that produced a variety of pieces for the theatre. This stile cannot easily be defined. In the works of those antients who remain to us, it appears in general to be natural, magnificent, harmonious, full of strong expressions, lively colours, bold strokes, and energetic figures: but this plainness, this pomp, these numbers, this force, this variety, this boldness, and this energy, do not resemble the same qualities when they reign in the epic, and the other poems where they are placed. It is something, I know not what, that taste renders attractive, and it is so difficult to attain, that a tragedy well written, passes this day for a master-piece, if in other respects there is nothing that wounds good sense: while a regular

* See Horace's art of poetry, v. 280, Eschylus taught to speak in a lofty stile.

As the virtuous Matron, when she dances by command of the priest on festival days.

† See Horace's art of poetry, v. 232.

tragedy, full of fine strokes, will most assuredly fall, if it is defective in stile and versification. This kind of delicacy will appear palpable to whoever will be at the trouble of comparing certain performances of authors since dead, which only had very slight success, and which prejudice and time have thrown into oblivion, with pieces perhaps of much less strength, but written more correctly, and which, from that very reason, attract the applause or the indulgence of the spectators, and even of the readers. It is no little merit therefore in the antients to have arrived in so small a space of time to the true taste of the tragic stile by the footsteps of Homer: and it is also their great misfortune not to have been able to make themselves universally and easily understood in their own language. How often are they judged with too much rigour, only because we see them divested of their most precious colourings? How few of those who read them in their original language, are deeply enough acquainted with them, to be sensible of all their delicacy? The best translations cannot make sufficient amends to Grecians, for what they lose by those translations, if the reader does not lend to them the force of his own understanding. I perceive too plainly, that mine stand in need of such a precaution, whatever pains they may have cost me.

XVIII. Before we shew, by the works of the poets, how they applied themselves to the practice, after they gained the theory, it may be well to say a word of the theatre, and of its ornaments, because it is one of the inventions of Eschylus. Before his time Thespis did not understand any other method, if we believe Horace, than to carry about his actors in a travelling theatre, which was no other than a cart; a public entertainment upon which the Italians and Germans have made refinements. Eschylus was the first who thought of building a more solid theatre, and adorning it with decorations fit for the subject. He masked the face of the actors, he raised them upon the buskin, and dressed them in training robes, to appear more majestic. This was the exterior rough draught of tragedy: but this was only in consequence of the first invention by Eschylus, which was tragedy

The Theatre,
and what be-
longs to it.

dy itself, and which will be granted to him without hesitation. If to what I have said, the testimony of Philostratus * be added, who assures us that Eschylus introduced upon the stage the heroes and all those personages whom we commonly see there. Sophocles since perfected the decorations. According to Vossius and other authors, he augmented the chorus to the number of fifteen, after Eschylus had limited them to twelve. He invented white shoes and stockings for the dancers, that their movements might appear more attractive and brilliant to the spectator: lastly, he studied the talents of those who acted his pieces, with a view of accommodating his writings to their capacity. A conduct worthy of remarking, since a part written according to the taste and power of the actor cannot fail of being well performed.

To come back again to the tragic decorations †: the theatre of Athens was then composed of wooden benches, as well as the amphitheatres, that rose by degrees: but one day, when Pratinas gave to the public one of his pieces, the amphitheatre overcharged, broke and sunk down all on a sudden. This accident engaged the Athenians, who were already much prepossessed in favour of plays, to elevate those noble theatres, imitated afterwards with so much splendor by the Roman magnificence. Their enclosure was circular on one side, and square on the other: the half circle contained the spectators, ranged by stories one above another, and the long square was adapted to the actors and the shew. There were machines of all sorts for the deities of water, heaven, and hell. Palaces, temples, squares and cities, were seen in perspective at the end. The change of decorations, the flyings, the heavens in glory, and all the parade that is employed in the modern theatres of Europe, were employed there, but with much more cost and grandeur: for, without having recourse to Vitruvius, or to those authors who have particularised all the pomp

* Jul. Caf-buleng of the theatre, book 1, chap. 2.

† We may see a more extensive account of all this in two dissertations of Monsieur Boindin, the one upon the theatre of the antients, tom. 1. of the memoirs of the

academy of inscriptions, page 136. The other upon the masks, Tom. iv. page 132.

See also the jesuit Tarquinius Gallucius, of Roman tragedy and comedy, printed anno 1621. And before them Vitruvius.

displayed by the Greeks and Romans, it is sufficient to judge of the expence, if we recollect that the charges of the theatre, and the pieces acted in it, were defrayed by the Athenian state, and that more was expended in those sort of diversions, than the amount of many of the Grecian wars.

Under the concentric demi-circles, where the spectators sat, little porches were contrived, to retire into in case of bad weather; for it is remarkable, the antient theatres were almost entirely uncovered. To guard themselves against the heat of the sun, they spread large curtains, tied by cordages to the extremities of the theatre; and that nothing might be wanting for the convenience and the pleasure of the spectators, delicacy and luxury were carried so far, that a constant dew of perfumed waters was falling from the top, by means of innumerable little statues, which adorned the coping of the edifice.

The employment of an actor, was for a long time held in honour among the Greeks: the poets themselves represented their principal parts. Sophocles was the first who declined it, and he did so only for want of talents, and a voice. Eschines and Aristomedes, those two great Athenian orators, the last of whom was sent embassador to Philip †, were not ashamed to have appeared upon the theatre. Eschylus, before them, had made no difficulty of it. Thus we see, that in every instance, as I said before, he ennobled the scene, after having been, if I may speak in that manner, the creator of it. He was the first who, instead of disguising the faces of the actors by lees of wine, dressed them, as Boileau expresses it, *in a more honourable mask*. It must, however, be confessed, that this mask, joined to the other ornaments, could not but take away in some measure the grace of the action:

* Plutarch (translated by Amiot, in the tract entitled, Whether the Athenians have excelled more in arms than literature?) says, speaking of them, "Whoever is willing to make a computation how much every play cost them, will find that the Athenians have expended more upon the representation of their tragedies, either

" of the Bacchantes, or the Phenicians, or the Oedipus, or Aetionus, or to represent the actions of a Medea, or an Electra, than in their wars against the barbarians, waged either to take empire from them, or to defend the Athenian liberty against them."

† King of Macedon.

but, on the other hand, the spectators were at such a distance, that they could not perceive the delicate features. Thus, as the theatre grew larger, this sacrifice became in proportion necessary. A man who represented a god or a hero, made the appearance of a giant: he had a head, legs, and arms that were added, and all the rest was answerable to this enormous grandeur, to equal the stature of heroes: above all, Hercules is said to have been eight feet high. For such was the prejudice of the populace, that they imagined the great men of the heroic times were of a most extraordinary size; and Juvenal describes children frightened at the sight of these personages, and hiding themselves in the breast of their mothers. The mask had something very singular: The immense aperture of the mouth was so contracted, that it encreased the sound of the voice: it was, in effect, a true voice-bearer. It was necessary in another respect, to empower the voice to fill the space of the place. Brazen vessels were fitted for that purpose, in the intervals of the amphitheatre: these vessels * being adjusted to the different tones of the human voice, and of the musical instruments, rendered, by their consonance, the sounds more agreeable, more strong, and more distinct. The voice was the principal object of the care of the actors: they omitted nothing to render it sonorous. In the fire of action, they followed the tone given to them by the instruments, and purposely lowered and heightened their voices to notify exactly where the passions demanded loudness. This, perhaps, has been the reason why some people have thought that the Grecian tragedies were entirely sung; or at least that they were a declamation modulated, and noted in exact form: no such thing appears. The whole assemblage, we may see, was too machinal, and the effect was different from action, without disguise. But this is an article which I intend to discuss as I go forward, in giving a compleat idea of the Grecian theatre.

* Answering in effect to our sounding boards.

DISCOURSE

UPON THE

PARALLEL of the THEATRES.

I. **N**O difficulty ever arises in comparing modern sculpture with the antient: all who excel at this day in one or another of those arts, agree, without blushing, that notwithstanding the endeavours of the most sublime geniusses, whose works will be the admiration of all future ages that shall see them, still the antient Greeks preserve a simplicity over every thing that is most perfect in that kind. But it is not so with the works of wit: a comparison there between the antients and moderns seems odious to some, rash to many, and presumptuous to all; who, though not idolaters of antiquity, still bear it great respect. Is not taste then, which ought to be the sovereign judge in these two kinds of comparison, always the same? Undoubtedly it is: but taste in painting and sculpture, being guided by the eyes, proceeds with more certainty; but with more timidity in matters of writing, where, if I may be permitted to say so, the only guide is entirely spiritual, and the light so refined, so pure, and so thin, that the least shades of prejudice confound it at once, and change all into darkness. Let us dare, however, to try the use of this light, and to confront the antient theatre with the modern; to try at least to mark, if possible, the extent and limits that taste gives to this parallel; and to draw in favour both of one and the other consequences so clear, that partiality shall not be able to disavow them.

The difficulty greater in comparing writings, than in comparing other works of taste.

II. As theatrical entertainments have been made for spectators, and adapted to their taste, which has been most carefully studied, we must, above all things, represent the genius of the antient and modern spectators. Of the latter we know enough: an exact

The necessity of knowing the genius of the Grecian spectators.

idea ought in justice to be given of the former. To succeed in this, it is necessary to take things from the highest; and, far from being driven from our subject, all that we can say will only make us enter more profoundly into the spirit of the Grecian tragedies: a spirit which we cannot know without all the preparatives that I shall bring to enlighten it; to draw it from amidst its embers, and to fill my readers with it, before I introduce them into the Grecian circus.

A general idea
of Athens.

III. At the birth of tragedy, under Eschylus, according to the epoch determined in the second discourse, Athens raised herself to the highest point of her glory: at her beginning she had had kings; but they were kings such as Sophocles and Euripides paint Theseus*: that is to say, kings whose authority was so extremely bounded, that it made them looked upon rather as the first citizens, than the chief of the state. These popular sovereigns made their own authority consist in partaking with the people, or rather in preserving for them, the sovereign authority. It was by this means they preserved themselves; so great an attraction always had the Greeks towards democracy. I say, all the Greeks; for the kings of Thebes† and Lacedemonia†, had no greater privileges than those of Athens. The kings of Lacedemon made it a point of honour to obey the laws; and, by a single word from the ephori, abandoned conquests already in great forwardness. Royalty in all parts of Greece was scarce any thing but the support of liberty; and the Grecian liberty was never so happy, as under the auspices of this singular species of monarchy. Revolutions, that happened afterwards, shew plainly that *there* was the fixt point of true liberty, and the exact medium between the republican licence, and tyrannick despotism of the DIONYSII. It is under this point of view that we must look upon the kings whom the tragic poets have represented to us: kings, whose manners and popularity will cease to give offence, when we have conceived how and at what

* See Oedipus at Colona, and the Suppliants by Euripides.

† These were, however, monarchs; and

it was for that reason that Athens despised their government. See the Suppliants of Euripides.

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price they became kings. Creon in Sophocles, and Hippolitus in Euripides, disdain the crown. In our days it would appear incredible. Indeed, according to received ideas, such a circumstance goes beyond theatrical probability. Human moderation is not exerted in that point; but the ideas were very different, because the kings were so. The rank only distinguished the Grecian kings, almost nothing else. This rank, sterile as it was, did not fail however to flatter extremely human ambition, as appears by the history * of Eteocles, and Polynices. To reign, was, in short, among the Greeks, only to be the man of the state, with his head in the closet, and his arm in the war. War itself made the capital of the sovereign dignity, which drew all its grandeur from the title, which we call in our days general of the whole army: a title which the Romans thought approached so nearly to royalty, that they scarce ever failed to recall their most able generals before the end of a very brilliant campaign. Such was the idea of royalty, which the seventeen kings enjoyed in Athens, from the time of Cecrops to the time of Codrus, whose generous consecration of himself to his country is well known.

After him, this shadow of dignity was converted into magistracy or pretorship, by the name of *Archon*, a name that appeared less odious, and more proper to dispel the fancies which always haunted the station of monarchy. These magistrates or archons were perpetual: there were thirty of them, if we reckon from Medon to Alcmeon, who ran in succession for more than three ages †. But as perpetuity appeared to have too imperious an air, especially among a people who from being become free, were become exceptionous in point of freedom: the duration of that magistracy was reduced to ten years, and there followed successively seven of the decennial archons. At length licence encreasing with liberty, they rendered them annual, in the twenty-third olympiad; and this settlement continued a long time.

It is remarkable, that the Athenians only arrived by degrees at that form of government, which was established by the Romans

* But this was at Thebes, not at Athens. 67 years from the foundation of Rome:
See the Phenicians of Euripides. 687 years before our æra.

† The second year of the 23d Olympiad:

at one stroke, as soon as they had delivered themselves from their kings. This difference is the more considerable, as the Romans did not establish or prolong the extraordinary administration of their dictators, unless in the most pressing exigencies of the state. But the Athenians, on the contrary, went on always in diminishing the power of the archons, in proportion as their exigencies encreased. As they had scarce any enemies without doors, liberty ill understood, raised them enemies within: the domestic dissensions produced almost the same effects in Athens, as in Rome; but the Athenians, naturally more inconstant than the Romans, determined to change the form of their government. They thought that written laws (and written with blood) would be more respected than laws that were spoken. Draco was chosen as legislator: his laws were so rigid, that they only lasted twenty-six years, till the time of Solon. He was desired to make other laws: he carefully studied the genius of his nation; thought much, did his best, succeeded little. Sometimes during the four and twenty years, or thereabouts, that Athens was regulated by his laws, she found the difference that there is between a reasonable authority, and an inflexible rigidity, or an unbridled licence: but as the empire of reason is seldom more lasting than that of severity, this empire did not subsist in all its purity, even during the time of its author. Solon could not prevent factions in point of government: many factions were formed, and Pisistratus cunningly taking advantage of this intestine division, made use of one of the factions to establish himself in the throne. This unforeseen usurpation reunited all parties, and made the Athenians to open their eyes: but it was too late. Three times the tyrant was driven away: his constancy prevailed against redoubled efforts. He reigned: his reign was long; but he rendered it happy by his exact observance of the law. Nevertheless, the Athenians, seconded by the Spartans, and recollecting themselves the taste of their antient liberty, shook off the yoke for ever. They drove away Hippius, the eldest son and successor of Pisistratus. He took refuge in Persia with Darius, son of Hytaspes: he came back again, even with troops; but to no purpose:

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purpose : the negotiations between the Athenians and Darius were followed by an open war; and this was the beginning of the most brilliant age of Athens : the age of its grandeur, magnificence, riches, monuments, and theatrical entertainments: the age of its poets, philosophers *, orators, historians, heroes, and great men of every kind. Above all, it was the age of tragedy, and of the three Grecian authors who raised it to that high point, in which we shall represent it in this work.

Having lightly run over the anterior age of Athens, it seems to me necessary to insist a little more upon that age, which was the source of so many wonders, both in peace and war. The destiny of every nation seems to require that it should have its fine age, and its completion of grandeur, to which it arrives by an insensible progress; and from which it descends afterwards imperceptibly, and by degrees. Such was the age of Augustus, and such had been long before the age of Athens. Athens dared to rely upon her own forces, which were nothing in comparison of those of Persia and the great king: so was the king of Persia called. A very limited republic had the boldness to carry her arms into the very bosom of a vast monarchy, and exerted all her policy to hinder the enemy from penetrating into her own bosom. She succeeded in her design. Datis, general of the Persians, was willing to make reprisals by entering deeply into Attica. The Athenians prevented him: they advanced to meet him, seconded only by those of Platea, and conducted by Miltiades. They gained the famous battle of Marathon †, in which Eschylus was engaged, and approved himself as good a warrior as he was a good poet. The victory, in which Hippias lost his life, and in which six thousand four hundred men of the enemies, and less than two hundred of the Athenians were killed, elated extremely the heart of a people, returned to freedom and a commonwealth. The terror which such a victory poured upon the Persians, the three years absolutely necessary to recover such a blow, the esteem which Athens gained by it throughout all Greece

* Anaxagoras, Socrates, Pericles, Thucydides, &c.

† The third year of the 72d Olympiad:

490 years before our æra: and 264 years from the foundation of Rome.

and the neighbouring nations, inspired the Athenians with that grandeur and haughtiness with which all the tragedies of Eschylus are filled. The Athenians believed themselves to be the supreme arbiters of Greece, which they had defended; and by this proud opinion they hewed out a road by degrees, to become so in reality. It was then that Eschylus, nourished in the ideas and exercises of war, formed and brought forth the true tragedy, as we have before observed. His performances excited towards him rivals; but the original inventor often carried the prize by the success of the execution. Whilst he flourished, Sophocles was born to imitate and surpass him. Fifteen years afterwards was born Euripides, competitor with those two great poets, who has left the victory undecided between Sophocles and himself. He came into the world ten years after the battle of Marathon: the same year of the naval combat of Salamina *, where Leonidas commanded in chief at the head of the Lacedemonians all the Grecian allies; although the Athenians under the conduct of Themistocles had brought the greatest number of ships, for which reason they attributed to themselves all the honour. This day, so shameful for Xerxes, and so glorious for the Athenians, was followed by the victory at Platea. Mardonius was killed there: he had been left by Xerxes to supply his room in Greece. And as a last trial of glory and success, a naval fight at Mycale delivered the Greeks entirely from an inundation of Persians. The Athenians celebrated at Salamina these glorious victories by a trophy, and by hymns sung † by Sophocles, then young, at the head of the Athenian youth. Athens ‡ become more and more proud by repeated success, took from that pride itself a new brightness, with which she animated the genius of

* The first year of the 75th Olympiad: 480 years before our æra: 274 years from the foundation of Rome.

† Athenæus's *Dipnosophists*. Book I.

‡ "Athens was very flourishing while luxury reigned. It was the reign of heroes: they were dressed in purple cloaks, under which they wore vests, striped with divers colours. Their hair was tied decently, and in it they placed small orna-

ments of gold in form of grasshoppers, which encompassed their head of hair, and their forehead. Servants carried behind them folding-chairs, that they might stop more commodiously when they pleased. Such were the heroes of Marathon."

Athen. *Dipnas*. book 12. *Ælian Var. hist.* book 4. chap. 22. and others before them.

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her warriors, her orators, and her poets. By her numerous vessels she possessed the empire of the sea; and that point only made her look upon the other cities of Greece as states destined to become her provinces. Weary of yielding precedency, she affected a scornful emulation with Lacedemon, and with Thebes; and this emulation degenerated into hatred for the one, and contempt for the other. This afterwards was the source of her own destruction: but these sentiments did not yet break out openly. The city of Athens applied all her attention to fortify herself, under a real, and by no means a suspicious pretence of putting herself in a condition not to be insulted by the Persians, and to be enabled to continue the war at their expence. The war was in a manner resolved upon. Xerxes, who had too sensibly felt the forces of a republic whose citizens were born warriors, had recourse to negotiation. He offered even to repair the devastations, of which he had left very melancholy traces in Attica; and these offers from a powerful, although an humbled enemy, appeared not proper to be despised. An attention was paid to them; but Themistocles opposed them in so lively a manner, that the advice was changed, and war was resolved upon. Till that time all Greece had reposed the command of their armies in the Lacedemonians: Pausanias, their chief, had commanded in the affair of Platea; but afterwards he became suspected, or perhaps guilty of treason. Such an incident gave the Athenians a pretence to take off the mask: a pretence which they seized immediately, making it appear of great weight in all the Grecian cities; and after having gained them, they obtained the command of the Persian war. This was enough to make them go farther. From priority they passed to sovereignty, from sovereignty to tyranny. Their delicacy took offence at every thing, and went so far as to treat the Greeks rather as subjects than allies. Nevertheless they amassed riches without number, and they acquired an authority without bounds: for, according to an agreement *, every Grecian city paid them an annual sum; and they levied it less by the title of a quota for the war with

* La convention.

which they were burdened, than by the title of a tribute. At the beginning this was only a sacred deposit for the good of the public: they always concealed it with great care in the temple of Delphos. None of it was touched, except with the utmost precaution, for the expences of the war, either to keep it off, or to prevent it. But the Athenians soon made themselves arbiters, and refused to come to any account; and their republic, under pretence of being the buckler and the sword of Greece, disposed of the common treasure at her own will and pleasure. Thus she found the means not only of furnishing the expences of the war, but of supplying still at a much greater expence her own luxury, which she carried to the very highest degree; whilst Lacedemon, though very rich, still kept herself within the bounds of that frugality which had been ordained by the laws of Lycurgus.

By the assistance of this money, and of her own great revenues, Athens adorned her temples, theatres, circusses, columns, statues, porticos, baths, and a prodigious quantity of edifices; where all the delicacy of the arts, and all the sumptuousness of a great and rich state immortalised themselves to serve one day as a model to the luxury of the Romans, and other future nations, in point of magnificence and taste.

Half an age passed since the victories over the Persians, before Lacedemon, wrap'd up in her own philosophic virtue, dared to reprimand openly the haughtiness of a republic, who carried herself so loftily above all the rest of Greece, by splendour, riches, and the superiority of an usurped empire. But at length patience was at an end. The resentments of Sparta, seconded by many Grecian cities, broke out all of a sudden against Athens, and gave motion to the Peloponnesian war, which commenced in the fiftieth year of Euripides*. Athens, by her naval armies, and by the Grecian states, which her power and their own fear retained in her interests, sustained this war during twenty years, without any great uneasiness, and almost without feeling her losses, as she was in a condition to support them: but the siege of Syracuse,

* The second year of the 87th Olympiad; 431. years before our Æra; 323 from the foundation of Rome.

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rashly undertaken, drained her of money and of men. The plague completed what the war had begun. Her allies threw away their fear, and deserted her. Her name and her courage maintained her seven years longer: but she was forced to yield at last to the efforts of the Lacedemonians, who called in the Persians to their assistance. Athens * was taken by Lyfander a year after the death of Sophocles, and lost her empire, which passed to the Lacedemonians not for any long duration: thirty years afterwards, Athens, by the same assistance which had been made use of against her, retook the upper hand, and drew at least the Greeks from their slavery to Sparta, who had not made a better use of her power than Athens. Thebes, in her turn, appeared upon the stage with her Epaminondas, and afterwards the ballance leaned sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, till Philip, the father of Alexander the great, fixed at length the Grecian empire in Macedonia, after so long and obstinate a dispute for it by the three † states. This is sufficient to give a general idea of the situation in which Greece was, in the age of our tragic poets.

Let us return to the genius of their spectators. Pride, fomented by victories and great riches; independence, the fruit of liberty, carried to excess, and a certain kind of arrogance in the air and manners, so as to give the lowest of the Athenian citizens that superiority which attends sovereign cities: all this together formed in Athens an assembly of men who looked upon themselves as much above other men as man is above a beast. This vanity went so far, as not only to treat strangers as barbarians, but even the Greeks themselves, who were not of Attica. Attica, idolatrous of herself, thought only of giving herself incense: madly fond of her own chimeras, she transformed them into divinities. Minerva, the goddess of the fine arts, evidently granted to the Athenians her name and protection ‡. The statue of Diana was not to remain among the Thracians, a barbarous people, unwor-

* The first year of the 94th Olympiad; 404 years before our *Æra*; 350 from the foundation of Rome.

† Lacedemon, Sparta, Thebes.

‡ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, by Euripides; *The Eumenides* of *Æschylus*; *The Electras*; by the three poets; *Oedipus at Colonus*, by Sophocles, &c.

thy of the goddess: Orestes, in concert with Iphigenia, stole it away, and transported it into Attica, a residence proper for it.

Not only heroes but gods submitted to the decisions of the celebrated Areopagus*; but that tribunal itself submitted to the popular judgment of Athens. The Eumenides, fierce as they are represented, lost their process against Orestes at this tribunal, and thought themselves happy to make their peace by accepting of altars erected in the city of Athens.

Attica alone possessed monuments that proved formidable to her enemies. The dead body of Oedipus was a bulwark against the enterprises of Theseus; as were the dead bodies of the Argives against Argos. Prodigies abounded throughout her whole territory. Every thing, in short, among the Athenians was great and divine. Abundance and prosperity produced the arts and sciences. Tragedy and comedy were born there successively, and were received there with a kind of idolatry. The sacred ceremonies were changed into diversions. Emulation multiplied the poets, and their numbers occasioned contests, prizes, and crowns to be established. The people, passionately fond of theatrical amusements, became insatiable of them. The temples yielded to the encreasing grandeur of the theatres, in whose bosom all Athens was assembled. The Athenians were infatuated as to verses, and learnt whole tragedies by heart as fast as they were played: a madness which was of great use to the soldiers who were made prisoners in the defeat of Sicily. To repeat the verses of Euripides, was always a sufficient enchantment to the Sicilians, which occasioned the proverb, *he is dead in Sicily by repeating verses*. Even the kings of the neighbouring states, loaded with kindness the best Athenian poets. Euripides often experienced their favours; but the applause of a people who were as good judges as they were

* Areopagus here signifies the judges who sat in the judgment-hall, or judicatory of life and death, who in general were called *Areopagite*. They determined all matters of consequence relating to the commonwealth. Monsieur Brumoy seems to hint that their decisions were biased by the Athe-

nian populace: I have therefore ventured to put in the word *popular*.—Some authors think the tribunal of Areopagus was situated in the midst of the city: their conjecture seems most probable, as remains of it are still to be seen.—See the word *Areopagus* in Calmer's dictionary.

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eager spectators of plays and novelties, was the height of flattery. It was not Poetry alone that made her fortune at Athens: Philosophy held there a most distinguished rank. Socrates did not enter the lists till after many others had played great parts there. Eloquence, above all, held the first place. In one word, Athens (as Cicero says) passed for the inventor and the mother of all the arts.

IV. Inconstancy and levity, those natural defects of a multitude The character of the Athenians. unbridled and untaught, were characterised particularly in the Athenians of this age. Their heroic warriors, Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, proved this disposition to their own detriment, and to the shame of their country. Even the poets felt sometimes sad effects from the Athenian disposition. Superstition was in fashion, as it was afterwards at Rome: but by the works of our poets, it appears not to have reigned in so dangerous a manner as not to allow some rallies against it. It is true that Eschylus once was accused of impiety, and he would have been a victim of Athenian vengeance, if one of his brothers who had lost an arm at the battle of Salamina, had not redemanded from the people a brother who had paid so great a tribute in his person in favour of his country. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to reconcile the laughter of these people on account of the rally against the gods, which Aristophanes puts into the mouth of Socrates, with the condemnation of Socrates himself*. Generally

* In the comedy of the Clouds, see the third part, and the explanation of this problem at the end of the whole work. In the mean time I beg the reader to give attention to this note. Plutarch, (in his tract of the manner of reading the poets, translated by Amiot) speaking of the variety of poetical fictions in the pagan religion, cites, among other things, that beautiful part where Homer speaking of Jupiter, says, that he weighed in the balance the fates of Achilles and Hector. "Eschylus, continues he, [Plutarch] has added to this fiction an entire tragedy, which he has entitled, The weights, or the ballance of souls, making

"Thetis on one side stand close to the scale
 "of the ballance, and Aurora on the other,
 "both praying for their sons, who are both
 "fighting: nevertheless, there is no man
 "who does not see clearly that this is a fiction, and a fable contrived by Homer,
 "to give pleasure, and to bring surprise to
 "the reader, &c." This, I believe, is a solution to a very great difficulty which is met with in the writings of the Grecian poets, especially in Aristophanes: I mean the extreme liberty they take in laughing at their gods. The decision is easy to make. There was a serious and a fabulous religion: the one was for practice, the other for the theatre.

nerally speaking, the Athenians were at that time vain, hypocritical, captious, interested, slanderous, and great lovers of novelty. As to their popular manners, they are painted in the Grecian tragedies. The equality which reigned among the free citizens, made them walk together on all occasions without a train, without ceremony, without pomp, without slaves, without arms. The magistrate was seen going to market to buy himself the things that he wanted. The streets and the public places were filled with persons who appeared idle, and often were so in effect. One would have imagined they were so at all times, to see them entertain themselves in groopes in the streets, or assemble together in the amphitheatres, to reason there upon affairs of state, philosophy, or news. The whole city belonged to the republic, and to the individuals, in the same manner as a house belongs to a numerous family. They would have been much surpris'd to have beheld the city of Paris, where people rapidly pass by each other, without speaking to, or knowing each other. Nothing more simple than their manners: nothing more refined than their taste. *Atticism*, of which they were so jealous, communicated itself to the lowest of the people. Every one in his ordinary business picqued himself upon speaking justly and politely: witness that woman who sold herbs, and who knew Theophrastus to be a stranger by some particular Attic phrase, in which he was defective, either in the expression or the accent, in which a long sojournment at Athens had not rendered him perfectly correct.

This Atticism, which afterwards became the urbanity of the Romans, was a longer time passing to Rome. It was not acquired there but by the force of years and pains: but nature presented it to the Greeks. The Romans entered late into theatrical pieces, and with difficulty succeeded in them. It was not till the time of Augustus, that tragedy, exiled from Athens, shone in all its glory at Rome: whereas with the Athenians it was no sooner born than

theatre. The last, however, did not fail to hurt the first; therefore Plato, in the second book of his Republic, blames Eschylus for having introduced a fable unworthy of the gods. He partly condemns Homer for the

same reason: but his particular opinion was of no consequence against custom. In a word, the fable for its poetry was received in the theatre, notwithstanding its absurdities.

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it came to perfection. Cicero was one of the first encouragers of it, in order to draw philosophy from Athens to Rome. Indeed, all the arts transported themselves slowly from the one republic to the other; which plainly discovers the difference of their geniusses, though independence and pride were equally the soul of the two states. The old Romans rather resembled the Spartans than the Athenians. With the former, solidity was preferable to brilliancy; the latter found out the secret of joining politeness to public utility. We may look upon Rome as a plain filled with trees of slow growth; and upon Athens as an orchard adorned with plants and flowers, that form a perpetual spring.

V. The character of the Athenian people may be traced in the Grecian tragedies. The Athenians were madly fond of liberty, idolators of their country, adorers of their customs, scornful or indifferent to all things that did not come from themselves. It is in these points principally that Eschylus and his successors have flattered them. The kings throughout the scenes are oftner sacrificed to Athenian pride, than to their own misfortunes. What praises of Athens! There is scarce a single play of those which remain to us, in which incense is not offered to Athens, either for the wisdom of her policy, her pre-eminence in arts, or her superiority over the rest of Greece. Every thing seems to tend to flatter her. There are entire tragedies where that is the single point. In regard to the customs and the fashions, we see them imitated in all the plays. We see the same manner of disputing, haranguing, defending; weeping over the dead, and imploring the gods: The chorusses, those images of the people, display the same liberty, the same choice of words; in short, the same turn of wit, always Athenian. Not that all the heroes of the three poets are purely Athenian, as our heroes, in the same manner, are all Frenchmen, for so we have been reproached. They neither contradict their character nor their country; but as they are all drawn either from Grecian fables, or Grecian history, it has been easier for the Greek poets to give them an Attic air, without entirely disguising them, than it was to Corneille to represent the old Romans.

Romans to the French nation, without giving them a little of the French manners; or at least, an air uniform to our manners. The air of the tragic heroes of antiquity, is not diversified farther than to make them known. Indeed, they ought to be little different, because they were all Grecians: for the three poets have not searched for subjects in any other place but Greece. The Greeks were too proud to taste any play drawn from the customs of barbarians, whom they despised; unless from the Persians with whom they were in competition, and whom Eschylus sacrificed to them, if I may say so, in the piece which carries that name. Besides, the natural love of what touched them nearest, induced the Greeks not to esteem what did not come from their own stores: very different in this particular from the French, who, contented with their own wit and taste, commonly prefer in matters of pleasure what is foreign and rare, to what has its rise among themselves. By and by, we will talk of the difference of taste, that distinguishes the Greek and French tragedies. Let us only here again place before our eyes the self-love of the Athenians; whose poets studying that particular foible in their countrymen, were willing to pour upon it eternal encomiums: and to represent kings abased, as a contrast to the republican liberty, personages entirely Athenian, or at least entirely Grecian, romantic accounts of their feasts, their pastimes, their cities; with all which circumstances the Greek tragedies are constantly filled. For all the Greek poets pursued the taste of painting Athens, and its manners, such as I have planned them.

They went farther: not only the comic, but even the tragic theatre became a satyr against the people in general, or against particular persons, who were obnoxious to the public. I speak not of Aristophanes, who so little spared our three poets, their partizans, and their reformers; but whose parricide muse murdered (as it is said) the wisest man of Greece*. I only speak of the serious-theatrical entertainments, of which the subjects appear to lean less either to satyr or politics. However, both satyr and

* Socrates. We shall see in its place, the explanation of *as it is said*.

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politics may be drawn from the many strokes that appear by the pens of Eschylus, Sophocles, and above all, Euripides. We there see strong marks of the progressive emulation and rivalry between Athens and Sparta. Athens is exalted to the skies. Sparta, by way of favour, is placed in the second degree, because Athens aspired to the first. Sometimes hatred discovers itself; and many sharp words are darted at the Lacedemonians: nor are the Thebans less spared when they begin to be mentioned, as aiming at the superiority. Let us say a word of these two states: it will be the key of what will be found relative to them in the tragedies, as we go on in reading them.

VI. Sparta was a long time the umpire of Greece. Virtue, Idea of the Lacedemonians. disinterestedness, and their consequences, procured her that empire: her own severity, and the jealousy of Athens were the causes that deprived her of it. The Lacedemonians, submissive to their kings, or to speak more properly, to the sovereign laws, took from Lycurgus that character which they have preserved since: he dictated to them his laws, obliged them by oath to preserve those laws till his return, and disappeared for ever. These laws, some articles excepted, contain all the severity of the purest virtue: they banish luxury and pleasure to such a degree, that modesty and frugality are carried to a kind of excess; which made Alcibiades say, *they expose their lives voluntarily: I am little surprised at it. To them death is a present.* Money, that touch-stone of virtue, was introduced, without corrupting them. The state was rich, and the individuals laborious. The * Emmet was undoubtedly the model by which Lycurgus chose to make Sparta a community of citizens, unanimously addicted to work, and so retentive of expence, as even to be parsimonious of words. Their laconic stile has even passed into a proverb. By this little sketch, we see that there was between the Lacedemonians and the Athenians the same kind of difference which Diogenes found out, and mentioned at his

* In the first Alcibiades of Plato, Socrates says, that the fable of Esop may be applied to Lacedemon, where great quantities of money were seen to enter, but no footsteps of money coming out.

return from Sparta into Attica. He said, he had passed from the apartment of men, to the apartment of women. The Athenians polished, soft, courteous, lovers of moderate joys, could not suffer that too pure, not to say, too savage virtue, of the Spartans. The poets, who so agreeably amused the former, must be ill satisfied with the latter, who had forbid theatrical entertainments. Ambition, and the thirst of sovereign empire, mixed itself with the Athenian antipathy to Sparta, and fortified it more and more: but caution was to be made use of; and that Athens should deliver Greece from the dependance of Lacedemon, to put it under her own, was not the work of a day. The strokes therefore that escape our [Grecian] poets, on account of Sparta, shew to us, as they are more or less bitter, the degree of hatred or fear that subsisted in the hearts of the Athenian spectators, and the *then* present disposition of Athens, in regard to her neighbours.

Idea of
Thebes.

VII. Thebes was in the same situation: for Thebes was desirous of acting her part, and pretended to empire. This, indeed, was late, and after the time of the poets, of whom we have been speaking: but even in their time the means were taken. Thebes made a figure in Greece, and merited the attention of Athens. In her good, or her bad actions, her antiquity rendered her venerable, as well as the events, whether true or false, of her earliest ages; such as the adventures of Cadmus and of Oedipus. Gods were reckoned among her citizens, more especially Bacchus, and Hercules. The siege which she had sustained against the seven chiefs, is celebrated by Eschylus, and was the most antient of all the sieges in Greece. The tragic end of Eteocles and Polynices, the misfortunes of their sister Antigone, and of all the posterity of Oedipus, his involuntary crimes and his monument at Colona*; besides numberless other particulars, are shining subjects in the finest Grecian tragedies. However, the thick air of Beotia, which sometimes had an effect upon the minds of the Thebans, rendered them an object of rally, and a subject for a proverb among the

* A town of Attica.

Athenians, whose fine politeness was shocked at the clownish rudeness of the Beotians. Thebes had, however, a Pindar, to oppose to a Sophocles. Thebes, far from aspiring to the first rank, in that age of which we have been speaking, was content to maintain herself, and sometimes to lean towards Athens against Sparta; and sometimes to Sparta against Athens. It is by these different interests of attachment, that we are able to explain what our Greek poets say; sometimes in a strain of praise, sometimes in a contrary strain: especially Sophocles, in his Oedipus at Colona. This unhappy prince, speaking to Theseus, in a kind of prophetic spirit, says, That Thebes and Athens shall one day have cruel contests; but that the tomb of Oedipus * shall be often red with Theban blood, and shall become the firmest bulwark to Athens. It is evident that in this piece Sophocles alluded to the war between the two states; and that his design was to contrive that the monument of Oedipus should appear as a scarecrow to the Thebans. This particular tragedy is by this means rendered entirely political; as are some others, in reading which they would become more agreeable, if we knew justly, amidst the obscurity of their expressions, the anecdotes of state upon which they turned.

VIII. Indeed, tragedy never failed to have political views among republicans, who improved every thing to the best advantage, that tended to give enigmatical advice in strong colouring. There are a number of sentences in the Greek tragedies, of which the natural sense no longer strikes us; but which bore a very fine meaning, though much disguised, when the pit, composed only of hearers of understanding, made the application. This was a point which the Romans did not understand: they made tragedies only to imitate the Greeks, and to make tragedies. The eternal sentences of Seneca, are only common-places that say nothing; and have but one philosophical and affected moral. The tragedies of the Greeks, though in appearance general, have, in effect,

Tragedy political, as well as comedy.

* It was acted during the Peloponnesian war.

particular allusions. Those kind of strokes are like the epigrams of Martial, many of which appear void of sense and salt; because the delicate and true sense is unknown to us: or (to make a comparison more proper for our subject) those kind of strokes are like some of the verses in Corneille or Racine, which we know were made in allusion to the present times; but which posterity will understand only in a general sense. If we cannot throughout the whole do justice to the Greek allusions, which I have mentioned, it is because the whole has not been brought down to us, and to guess it, would be ridiculous. But it is rational and sufficient to remark, that the Greeks were extreme lovers of these allusions*; because such an observation alone will incline us not to blame in them, what we do not understand: and it will contribute to mark the character of their tragedies, the only point that is here proposed. We shall sufficiently comprehend some of these strokes, when their aim turns only to the panegyric of the republican state, and to the pretended advantages which it has over the monarchical state. Of these kind of particulars, many will be found throughout their writings, and sometimes thoroughly criticised, even with a great degree of malignity: but our pains must be much more in unravelling the little particular and satirical touches darted even at the government of the Athenians. Touches, which often cost the author something more than repentance, when they were darted out too openly, and without skill: but they passed when they went off with dexterity, and with art. For the Athenian spectators were of such a disposition, that they were not offended with a jest even against themselves, when it was sufficiently nice, and sufficiently veiled to seize them at once, and to carry away their first applauses: they liked better to laugh at themselves, than not to laugh at all. Therefore they let the picture pass which Euripides has drawn of them, sufficiently plain in his Hippolitus, and which he puts into the mouth of Phædra; and therefore they favoured the preference which the Chorus gives in Andromache, to the monarchical over the

* We shall see this plainly proved in the comedies of Aristophanes.

republican state: at least they endured the satyrical painting drawn of the latter state. Nor, again, did they take offence to see in Helen the Spartan government finely preferred to the Athenian: that is to say, Aristocracy* to Democracy†: but it was necessary for the poet to study well his pit, and to aim so exactly, that his blow should not miss.

This is sufficient to shew to what a point the Grecian genius rose in regard to tragedy. We shall come to a more circumstantial detail, when we have said something personal of the three Athenian poets who remain to us. The public will not be sorry to know them from the few traces left of them by the antients; but they will be known better by their writings. I begin by Eschylus.

IX. Eschylus was born at Athens, the first year of the sixtieth Olympiad, five hundred and forty years before our Æra‡. He was born brave, and he embraced the profession of arms, at the time when the Athenians could number as many heroes as citizens. He had two brothers, warriors and brave like himself. He was in the battle of Marathon with one of them named Cynegirus; and afterwards in the battles of Salamina and Platea, with the other called Amynias: Cynegirus was also there. All three did their duty. Cynegirus was killed in the combat at Salamina, and Amynias lost his arm there. A military air appears in the pieces of Eschylus: every thing there breathes combats; and, in reading him, the imagination seems struck with the noise of war. This father of tragedy, confounded to have been vanquished by Sophocles, then young; or, as others say, by Simonides, in an elegiac contest upon the heroes of Marathon, retired in indignation into Sicily, to the court of king Hiero, the protector and friend of the discontented Athenian *Literati*. He composed there, as is said, a tragedy upon the subject of a city built by Hiero, and called Ætna. Some say, that he lived three years loaded with honours, and at length died there§, at the age of sixty-five, in a most extraordinary

Eschylus.

* That form of government which places the supreme power in the nobles.

† Where the sovereign power is lodged in the body of the people.

‡ 214 years from the foundation of Rome.

§ The second year of the 76th Olympiad; 475 years before our Æra; 279 from the foundation of Rome.

manner,

manner, according to a pretended oracle, which said, that he should not die but by a blow from Heaven. They add, that an eagle, which had taken up a tortoise, and endeavouring to loosen its prey, let it fall, either by chance, or to break it upon a rock, upon the head of Eschylus, and broke his skull. Most magnificent funerals were made for him; and a Greek epitaph was engraved upon his monument. The translator of the life of Eschylus, (by an anonymous author), has thus translated the epitaph.

Eschylus, the son of Euphorion, was born at Athens:
Buried in the fields of chearful Gela.

Thou, O plain of Marathon! art an avowed specimen of his valour;
And thou, O bushy Mede! hast tried him to thy loss.

According to that epitaph, the father of Eschylus was one Euphorion: Athens was his country: Marathon the field of his achievements: the states of Hiero his tomb. It is also said there that the Medes (for so they called the Persians, in the course of the war against the Greeks) had proved his valour at their own expence: but no mention is made there of his tragedies*. The reason is, because they were sufficiently known: they were more applauded after his death, than in his life-time. In the tragic career he gained thirty victories whilst he lived, and many others after his death: For the esteem of this poet went so far, that a decree was ordained, by which the state engaged itself to furnish out the Chorus (that is to say, the expences of the entertainment,

* Athenæus, in the fourteenth book of his *Dipnosophists*, says, "That although Eschylus had gained immortal glory by his tragedies, he preferred the honours of bravery to those of poetry, and ordered himself that this epitaph should be engraven on his monument." We must, therefore, join the anonymous author to Athenæus.

The same Athenæus (*Dipnosophists*, book 8) says, "That this poet was a great Philosopher; and that having sometimes been vanquished by unworthy competitors, according to the attestation of Theophrastus, (or of Chemeleon in his book of

"pleasure) he said, he consecrated his works to posterity, well knowing, that from thence they would one day receive the justice they deserved."

Eschylus, (says Plutarch in his *treatise of the manner of reading the poets translated by*

Amiot) being one day a spectator of the diversion called the Istmian games, one of the combatants, in boxing, received a great blow upon the face from the fist of his adversary: the assembly immediately cried out very loudly. "See, says Eschylus, the effects of custom and exercise! Those who see the blow given, cry out: he who receives it is silent."

which

which ran very high) to whoever would represent the pieces of Eschylus. A singular honour, which confirms (to speak it as I am going on) what I have already advanced, that the original of tragedy is entirely due to Eschylus. Sometimes particular persons were so generous to be at the whole expence. Themistocles was so once for Phrynicus.

X. Sophocles, the son of Sophilus, was born at Colona, a city ^{Sophocles.} of Attica, in the second year of the twenty-first Olympiad *. He celebrated his country by his Oedipus at Colona. His father, as some say, was a blacksmith; and, according to others, he was the master of a blacksmith's shop. It is by the difference only of these two employments, that Demosthenes, who was in the same situation, has been lowered or raised by different partizans. Whatever might be the original of these two persons, Demosthenes in time became the firmest defence of Athens against Philip, king of Macedon; as Sophocles had become before him a most considerable citizen, and so distinguished a warrior, as to command an army conjointly with Pericles †: but the greatest lustre that remains to him, is his poetical merit, which he carried to the highest degree. After having been the scholar of Eschylus, he put himself in a situation to dispute with his master, and even to surpass him. He did not always act his own pieces, as other poets did: his voice was not sufficient; but he gave quite another air to tragedy ‡. He had many children; one of whom had a dramatical disposition, like his father. Towards the latter end of his days he experienced the ingratitude of his children: as they grew weary of too long a dependence, according to their manner of thinking, they resolved to summon him before a court of justice, as a person incapable to govern his fortune or his family. Sophocles confounded them by a method, of which they had not had the

* Before our time 495 years; 259 from the foundation of Rome.

† Pericles says of Sophocles, that he was a good soldier, and a bad captain. Athen. Dipnos. Book XIV.

‡ "Sophocles said, that he would first

"alter that great height of invention in Eschylus; secondly, his melancholy and laborious disposition; and thirdly, the particular kind of his elocution"—*Plutarch's treatise of the profit of virtue, translated by Amiot.*

least notion. His only plea was a petition to his judges, that they would permit him to read the last tragedy which he had composed. (It was Oedipus at Colona). They were so charmed with it, that they sent him back loaded with praises, and his children with confusion. To this small piece of history, which Cicero and Plutarch * relate; an anonymous author of the life of Sophocles, adds, that this poet made a kind of comedy, in which he represented this event in its natural colours. I shall not stay to mention the little fables, which this author relates of a vision of Hercules, and such kind of facts. The only result from them is, that Sophocles was a perfect honest man, and that he loved the gods; although Atheneus † has not painted him in so favourable a light. He was crowned twenty times; and no discontent could make him listen to the offers of neighbouring kings, who were desirous to draw him to their court: he did more in that instance than Eschylus and Euripides. The account of his death is told differently: some will have it, that he died choaked by a grape-stone that could not pass. Others say, that he died by an extreme effort of pronouncing a long period at once, which hindered him from recovering his breath. Others again, that the joy to see himself crowned upon a certain day, made him expire upon the spot. They put upon his tomb the figure of a swarm of bees, to perpetuate the name of bee, to which the sweetness

* Sophocles being brought into a court of justice, by his own children, who loudly fell upon him, and affirmed that he doated, and by his great age was returned into a state of infancy, in order that by legal authority he might have a guardian appointed for him, read before his judges the entry of the Chorus of his tragedy, called Oedipus at Colona, which begins thus: "*Stranger, thou hast made thy entry into this fertile country, named from the town Colona, renowned for its good horses; where the agreeable songs of nightingales make the green valleys resound more sweetly than you have heard in any other place.*" As the song pleased the audience extremely, every one rose up, accompanied and conducted him to his house, with great acclamations of joy, and clapping of hands to his honour, as

they used to do when he went out of the theatre after one of his tragedies had been acted. *Plutarch's Tract, if an old man should continue to act in public affairs?*

† "Sophocles and Euripides in their private characters were much debauched. Eschylus and Aristophanes loved wine, and never composed but when in liquor; which made Sophocles say, "I know, Eschylus, that you succeed; but you do well only when you do not know what you do." Athen. Dip. Book X. and elsewhere. Nevertheless, Plato, in the first book of his Republic, says, that Sophocles being asked, what he thought of love? answered, "That he had run away from him, as from a cruel and unmerciful master." Plato is more worthy to be believed than Atheneus.

of

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of his verses had entitled him. From hence, perhaps, arose the imagination, that bees hung upon his lips, while he was yet in the cradle. He died at ninety years of age *; after having out-lived Euripides, who was much the younger of the two.

XI. This last of the three poets was born, as I have already *Euripides* said, at Salamina †; to which place Mnesarchus, his father, and Clito, his mother, had retired, when Xerxes prepared his great expedition against Greece. He came into the world amidst pomp, trophies, and triumphs, occasioned by the battles of Salamina and Platea. He was not of the same warlike genius as his two predecessors. His father, and the train of affairs, induced him to attach himself to the philosophers. His chief master was the celebrated Anaxagoras; of whose philosophy, Cicero, after others of the antients, speaks such fine things. Philosophy, indeed, became more brilliant, and more enlightened in the time of Euripides: but the attachment which this poet had to the philosophers, has thrown upon his works a certain air of the schools, with which the antient and the modern critics have a little reproached him. As Anaxagoras thought that he should fall a victim to his own philosophic sentiments; and with great difficulty (even by employing the power of his disciple Pericles) could save his life by exile, having asserted, that the sun was only a globe of fire. Euripides, frightened at this treatment, quitted the profession of philosophy, and changed himself into a poet: he discovered that he had a talent, of which he had been ignorant, for the theatre; and he exerted it so happily, that he entered the lists with those great masters of whom we have been speaking. Socrates himself, the sage Socrates, who had the same theatrical madness that possessed the other Athenians, never failed to to the new representations of the pieces written by Euripides, from pure esteem of his wisdom and virtue; which Socrates (as *Ælian* ‡ reports) thought he saw fully expressed in the plays of this

* In the fourth year of the 93d Olympiad; 405 years before our *Æra*; 349 from the building of Rome. Others say, they both died in the same year.

† The second year of the 75th Olympiad; 479 years before our *Æra*; 275 from the building of Rome.

‡ *Ælian* Var. Hist. Chap. 13. See the Clouds.

philosophic poet. Father Thomassin has found, in these works, more matter for his design, than in any other practical author of antiquity: and, to cite a more antient authority, Cicero, was, above all things, smitten with the poetry of Euripides. He is accused of having treated too ill, besides the Lacedemonians, (we have already mentioned the reason) Menelas, their king, women in general, and above all Medea. It is even affirmed, that he received five talents from the Corinthians, to throw upon that princess the infamy of the murder of her children, although they were the authors of it. By some he is justified from this accusation: but without discussing an hundred such things, which are little important towards the end that we propose, let us attach ourselves to what regards the person of Euripides. Atheneus, after Ion and Theopompus, does not say much good of the morals of this poet. He treats Sophocles and Socrates as ill: the whole upon the account of Socrates: but all three have had their defenders, who appear to be persons of more credit. According to Aulus Gellius *, and fifteen other authors, the correctors of his text, Euripides only carried five victories. It was often a multitude, prepossessed with passion, who pronounced the decision; so that Menander †, far from being ashamed at having been conquered by one Philemon, slighted the decree; and asked Philemon coolly, if he was not ashamed to have been his conqueror. Euripides, in his youth, quarrelled with Sophocles: no surprizing circumstance between two wits, who were running the same career: but they afterwards became great friends. This friendship, and this enmity, are both of them related in the five letters attributed to Euripides: but as it is difficult to decide whether those letters are not forged, we shall not insist upon them. We know by other sources, that Euripides was so well received by Archelaus, king of Macedon, that he became his favourite and his confident. The honour is almost equal to a poet of so much merit as Euripides, and to a king, who strove to draw to his court all persons and

* Aul. Gell. Noct. Art. l. 17. c. 4. † Ibid.

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things that were distinguished in Athens, by the best performances in wit and arts. Euripides bore the character of being very disinterested; although, to believe his letters, his enemies accused him of having quitted Athens from the temptation of the favour and presents of Archelaus. This prince, indeed, loaded him with them. A courtier, who was desirous of having a golden vessel, asked him for it in pretty evident terms: *Let it be carried*, says Archelaus, *to Euripides: you deserve to ask, and he deserves to have it without asking*. One day the king, by way of reproaching Euripides, in a jesting manner, observed, that contrary to the custom of all his other courtiers, he had brought him no present upon his birth-day. *To give to you*, answered the Poet, *would be to ask from you*. Archelaus was desirous that the poet should celebrate him by some tragic work: But Euripides wittily answered, *Heaven grant that nothing ever happens to you that may be a subject for tragedy*. He was reproached one day by an ill-bred fellow, that he had a strong breath. *It proceeds*, replied Euripides, *from having many secrets buried in my breast*.

After three years residence in Macedonia, he had the misfortune to be alone in a place out of the common road, where some furious dogs fell upon him, and tore him to pieces*, in such a manner, that he died in a little time, aged seventy-five years†. Aulus Gellius says, that the Athenians sent into Macedonia to require the body of Euripides; but the Macedonians constantly refused it, that they might honour their country with the magnificent tomb which they erected for him‡. The Athenians, therefore, were obliged to content themselves with an empty monument, upon which they engraved the name of Euripides.

It is certain, that notwithstanding the comedy of Aristophanes, entitled the Frogs§, where that antient, comic-writer cotemporary with the tragic authors, treats our three poets very cavaleerly,

* An author of his life, says, that this kind of death was contrived by a poet who was jealous of him.

† Plutarch's Treatise upon bashfulness.

‡ He died in Macedonia, and was buried

near Arethusa. Thunder fell upon his tomb, as it had done upon the tomb of Lycurgus. See Plutarch, in his Lycurgus, and Ammienus Marcellinus, book 17.

§ See the third part of this work.

c A DISCOURSE UPON THE

yet then, and since, the most distinguished honours were paid not only to their works, but to their memory. Statues were erected to them by a public edict; and all their works, most of which had been written by their own hand, were preserved in the public archives. They were probably the books, which, according to Galien, a king of Egypt, in order to adorn his Alexandrian library, was desirous of having, above all the manuscripts of Euripides, which contained seventy-five tragedies. He asked them of the Athenians, who refused him. In his turn, he refused the Athenians corn in a great dearth, till having received the manuscripts which he desired, he forgot the refusal, and the bad manner in which he received the present, and shewed nobly his acknowledgment, by permitting the Athenian merchants to carry away as much corn as they pleased, without paying the ordinary tribute. It would be useless to recite all the elogiums poured upon the three poets, by the Greeks and Romans.

A distinction
of the general
and particu-
lar character
of the poeti-
cal works.

XII. Such were the masters of the Athenian scene: but the character of their writings interesting us much more than their persons, this is the place to delineate that character so well, that the full view of it shall not be lost a single moment in the parallel which we here undertake to draw. Let us observe then, that the cotemporary persons, and citizens of the same country, have in their character something general, that extends to all; and something personal that distinguishes them among themselves. We know an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Frenchman, at first sight. All walk, all think, all act; but they do not walk, think, nor act alike. The difference strikes our eyes. A more refined, and less striking difference is that which is found in every man of the same nation: for the universal character subdivides itself infinitely; and the more this subdivision is extended, the more difficulty have we to decypher it. The immortal book of La Bruyere, our excellent fables, and our best comedies, are only so many sketches of those numberless cyphers, which distinguish men of the same climate. It is the same thing in regard to poetical works. Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, have an Athenian

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Athenian air, without resembling each other. Corneille and Racine have the French physiognomy, without any other likeness: still farther, the theatres of Greece, antient Rome, modern Italy, Spain, England, and France, have something in common; but they have at the same time differences so remarkable, that one single scene suffices to make each of them perceptible to the least judges, even if the name of their country is suppressed. The soil makes itself known by its fruit. There is a turn of wit that strikes in as lively a manner the imagination, as a foreign accent strikes the ear. Now, it is in regard to these differences that the parallel becomes difficult. We may carry it to a certain point, beyond which the thread of the comparison is lost; because there is a fixed rule, and an arbitrary rule; the one of which is inseparable from the other, when we begin to make a comparison between the antient and the modern. Comparisons of every kind almost have this extreme; but particularly the comparison of which we are speaking, in which the universal taste is no farther the sovereign judge, than to certain limits, where the arbitrary taste begins its empire, with such a despotism as often encroaches upon the former. Let us enter into the detail, and determine as far as possible the limits of the two tastes.

XIII. It was the business of the Grecian, as well as of our poets, to divert and instruct men of sense (for spectators must be only considered as men) by the most majestic theatrical entertainments. The antients and the moderns have in general taken the same methods to entertain their spectators. Their end has been the same; so again have their subjects, and their oeconomy for the ground-work: that is to say, their design of stirring up an agreeable melancholy. On each side the subjects have been great and noble: the oeconomy regular, according to the idea of regularity, which each has formed to himself. All this requires a serious examination. But not to repeat what we have said in the *second discourse* upon the principal parts of tragedy, let us here only consider them on the side which concerns the spectator: I mean, where they relate to men, and to men of such or such a nation.

The principle
of the paral-
lel.

XIV. It

The subjects. XIV. It is not surprizing that the design of tragedy, having been well digested in the divers æras of its splendor, the authors have entirely agreed in chusing none but noble subjects: although the architecture may be different, according to the times, the grandeur and magnificence of temples, and public edifices, have been always the same. Upon that point there has been no difference; no more than upon the idea of a noble and a proper stature. But it still appears astonishing, that feigned subjects are not suffered to compose tragedy: for how few modern authors have tried them, and with success? Comedy, at least the modern comedy, admits them often. In the antient comedy, we know, that the subjects were real, as well as the names: afterwards the names were counterfeit, and at last both the names and the subjects were feigned. Tragedy might from hence have taken a romantic turn: but no age has fallen into that error; nor has there ever been a subdivision of real and imaginary tragedy. I think I can perceive a reason for it in human nature: we can only be touched by the appearances of probability. Now there is no probability, that facts, great as they are in tragedy, facts that arise only in the houses of kings, or in the seat of empires, should be absolutely unknown. If then, the poet invents every part of his subject, even to the name, the mind of the spectator mutinies; all appears to him incredible; and the piece wants its effect, because it wants probability. But as comedy touches only common life, and the ridiculous parts of it, the spectator may suppose, and indeed does suppose, by suffering himself to be enchanted by the play, that the subject represented to him is a real fact, although not known to him. The case would not be the same, if the comic subject contained any thing of the marvellous: for then it must be authorized by known fables, which have the same effect as history; because custom has made us range them under the order of probability. From hence we may easily draw a sure rule, in what manner, and how far to insert into a known subject different circumstances, so as to fit the piece for the theatre.

Besides, with the Greeks, as well as with us, the subject for tragedy is not feigned: it is drawn from history, or authorized by popular traditions, which are living annals. But still in this point a remarkable difference may be perceived between us and the Greeks. We dive for truth into the source of history, as they did; but there lies the difference of which I am speaking: for the Greeks draw their materials only from the bosom of Greece. The history or the fables of their own country were to them inexhaustible; nay, their only funds. The rest of the world was as foreign to their theatres as to themselves. We do just the contrary. Our tragic theatre borrows its materials from abroad; and very seldom takes them from the history of our own country. Italy and Greece are our most fruitful mines. The whole universe affords us plenty: as to our kings, and our events, they scarce delight us upon the theatre: and here it is that we must begin to look upon the French and Athenian spectators, not as individuals, but as two nations whose common ideas bear no resemblance to each other. The Grecian pride only esteemed herself, and set not the least value upon other nations. Athens, above all, looked upon herself as the centre of all the wit and politeness in Greece. She scarce believed that common sense could be found in any other place. In comparison of Greece, every thing was barbarous. This double pride determined the poets to entertain the Athenians and the Grecians in a manner to their own taste. Their numerous tragedies were only the fabulous, or the true history of Greece: a constant subject, proper to flatter Athenian vanity. Our theatres, though in some respects like the Grecians, yet does not go so far as to exclude what is foreign entirely from our scenes: we only give it a French air. Augustus and Mæcenas, such as Horace has painted them, would not please us: they must contract a little of our manners. As to the antiquity of our monarchy, the grandeur of our most remarkable events, and the exploits of our heroes, they are subjects that give us pleasure in history: they are naturally interesting to us from the love we bear to our native country: but whether it is that our vanity startles at seeing truths in pure theatrical pieces, assume the appearances of fables;

fables; or that our curiosity presses for some kind of the marvellous, which we are not able to find in the simplicity of our annals; or lastly, that the length of custom, arising from tradition immemorial, has in a manner consecrated facts deduced from foreign countries, where distance and antiquity both conspire to impose upon us more effectually, than new or present objects, we are not easily reconciled to domestic themes upon our theatre. Another imperceptible, but real reason, is, that the greatest part of our antique names, respectable as they are, convey to the ear something barbarous and gothic, that shocks and spoils the finest poetry. It is from these secret reasons, that the siege of Troy, which in reality does not amount to one of the least of our sieges, makes, nevertheless, an impression of respect upon our minds, so as to enchant us, and carry away our approbation. The case is the same as in medals; where foreign models are more precious in our eyes than our own. With the Greeks the taste was very different; because Tragedy itself being born in Greece, they gave to it what distinctions they pleased, and turned it into domestic interest. Accordingly we see that there is not a city, a festival, nor a monument among the Grecians, which was not celebrated by one or more theatrical entertainments. It has not been unuseful, therefore, to shew, as we have done, what was the genius of the Grecian spectators, and to bring them in comparison with the spectators of our day; who (like the Romans) have inherited tragedy as a foreign pleasure, in which, of consequence, the domestic soul could not be involved. To say the truth, Comedy, which has come down to us also by imitation, has not had the same fate. She has assumed the moral and the manners of all the people who have adopted her: but that has been her single destination: without that she could never have obtained her end; which is to render popular vices ridiculous. Nevertheless, how much time has been taken up in making her entirely French? she has only become so by means of Moliere.

The person-
ages.

XV. After having reflected upon the subjects, let us cast our eyes upon the personages which have been presented in the Grecian scene,

scene, and in the scenes of our days. On each side heroes and kings have appeared: but the ideas of heroism and of royalty have been so very much changed, that Agamemnon and Achilles, the one king of kings, and the other hero of heroes (if I may be permitted to make use of the expression), are no longer the same men in Euripides and Racine, although the foundation of their character were the same; and undoubtedly it must have been so, because the point of view and the eyes being entirely different, the objects must be different also. Let us imagine an innumerable assembly of republicans on one side; and on the other, a crowd, not over numerous, of citizens inhabiting one of the richest monarchies. The former can only have ideas of insignificant kings, whose empire had often no larger bounds than their cities: kings so little monarchs, that they had not even the names. The latter, after a long revolution of years, have seen empires and monarchies passing under their eyes, and appearing formidable by their power and their riches: especially the Roman empire, which was almost become monarchical. The former, from an implacable hatred to the sovereign dignity, will not permit kings into their scenes, unless it be to enjoy the pleasure of seeing them abased. The latter cannot see them humbled, unless it be in order to raise up again the majesty, or rather the tyranny of *antient* Rome. The former knew no other kind of heroes, but such men as have been distinguished from the vulgar, by the personal qualities of the body, as well as the heart; by strength and stature, as well as valour and prudence. The latter having been accustomed to a more refined species of bravery, regard heroes rather by their sentiments and speeches, than by their actions. With the former, kings and heroes are only men, or at least never appear higher. The republican spirit levels them to their natural condition. With the latter they make a separate order of themselves: they are no longer men, they are Gods, and even something more: they neither resemble Gods nor men, except in the weaknesses of love. In all other points they are infinitely superior to men; and in the scenery they assume a right to insult the Gods. From these contradictory ideas of the antient and modern spectators, we shall draw very exact ideas: for we must judge of the other subaltern personages, by what we

shall say of the more considerable. I speak not here either of the slaves or the divinities, who appear in the Grecian scenes. The difference of ideas is very visible in that point. We shall soon discover the reason. Let us pursue the parrallel of the spectators, and let us go forward to the oeconomy of the tragic pieces.

The oeconomy of the tragic pieces.

XVI. The oeconomy invented by the Grecians was so natural, and so conformable to good sense, that it has been impossible not to follow it; or rather, to approach so near as the genius of the spectator, which must always be indulged, would permit. On both sides (all at once in Greece, and little by little in France) it has been understood, that probability was the only rule to regulate and arrange theatrical entertainments. It has, therefore, been resolved to dispose a subject in such a manner, that, at least, there should be the appearance of unity of time and place; the shadow of action, or real action; a manner of beginning, proceeding, and ending; an exposition, a plot, and a discovery of that plot. We have sufficiently explained those things in our second discourse; and it is sufficient, if we perceive that the poets of all times have either confined or lengthened the bounds of these principles. The Greeks, from a reason scrupulously exact, have limited these bounds too straitly. The Spaniards have removed them just as they have pleased; but other nations, in which the theatre has been most brilliant, and (to come to the point of its splendor) the Corneilles and the Racines have fought, more or less, to keep within these bounds, without being too much limited. We know sufficiently how much more conformable the one of these authors was than the other to the Grecian severity: we shall see how far the Grecians carried it beyond them. But it will not be from the purpose, to enquire how, and why our great masters, so enlightened as they were, thought themselves obliged to sin against art, with a view to embellish art. Thence will arise an essential difference between the antient and modern theatre, entirely resulting from the spectators.

The simplicity of the Greeks, and multiplicity of events in the modern theatre.

XVII. The Greeks had a taste conformable to their manners: the simplicity of their manners formed that taste. A single object, but considered in all situations, was sufficient to entertain, or to employ them. With them, variety consisted less in the multitude

of

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of the objects, than in the various methods of considering those objects. One question canvassed from its very foundation, either in their ordinary entertainments, or at the bar, or in the Lycæum *, entirely engaged their mind, which always was adapted to application. Their republican genius rendered them attentive, and consequently capable of contemplating a long time one identical object, without being desirous of running from one object to another. Our genius is very different, whatever may be the cause. Let it come from the nature of our climate, or from our own natural indolence, by an education a little too much tinctured with luxury; or lastly, a certain levity, attached to the lively character of our nation, it carries us to glance slightly upon divers objects, without stopping at any one. From these two characters arises the diversity of composition in the antient and modern theatrical pieces: for the poets have constantly followed the reigning taste.

Nothing can be more simple than the actions in the Grecian tragedies. No episode, no foreigner †, no wheel to be set going in what we at this day call *circumstances* ‡: not but there are of this kind, and even more interesting than ours; but the unity of the action carries on every thing progressively, without any machination, or affected perquisition. These are flowers that grow under our feet: we do not strew them by baskets full. Our great masters have thought fit to take a very different method from the antients, in engaging their spectators, whose passions are too slow in rising, or who are lovers of a multiplicity of events. They have done what Terence did with the comedies of Menander; out of two, he scarce found sufficient matter to make one. With us every personage has commonly his own interest, and his own action apart; and we have seen plays, in which it was difficult for us to distinguish the principal from the subaltern actions; they were so composed, not to say, overwhelmed together. At least

* A place in Athens, where Aristotle taught his philosophy; which was from thence called the philosophy of the Lycæum.

† *Nul personnage étranger.* No person introduced belonging to any other nation.

‡ *Ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui des situations.* The term *Situations* is entirely adapted to the French theatre. I have endeavoured to give it the only sense that it can bear in our language.

it is difficult to find any one, even of the most brilliant, where there is not whirlwind within whirlwind, event upon event, and a complication of interests; which last, I think, may be properly called *Episodes*. *Athalie* is the only one that I know of, where there is none of these, nor any social confidants: but to supply this, the author has subdivided his event, and has multiplied it with so much art, that he has, in some measure, joined the Grecian simplicity to the French vivacity.

It must not, however, be supposed that the Greeks wanted fire: on the contrary, every thing is animated, every thing speaks, every thing moves in their writings: But then, this proceeds more from the action and the play, than the words; more from the passion and the sentiment, than the discourse: while on the other hand, the French have often given into discourse and words, to supply action, and to assist passion. How many descriptions, sentences, and common-places, well digested, have drawn out such applauses, as ought to have been reserved for theatrical emotion, which made no impression. It is only cool presence of mind that applauds the beauty of verse in a play.

Let us return to scenes of surprize and *situation*. To make them discover themselves stroke after stroke, it has been necessary to bind together many incidents; which, when fastened, made it again necessary to relax the rigour of rules. Without such a relaxation, how should we have a *Cid*, a *Cinna*, and the *Horatii*? How should we see *Rogriguez* and *Chimena* discourse with each other twice in the same place, in which the quarrel of the count *Gormas* happened, and where the king gave sentence? How should we behold a conspiracy contrived in the apartment of *Augustus*, and almost under his eyes? Could we otherwise see, in the space of a few hours, scenes of love, battles, murders, judicature in all its form, and an hundred things, that would require a long series of time? In a word, how could we see so many beauties collected, if it was absolutely fixed to form a * whole joined together perfectly well proportioned? There could

* *Un tout-ensemble*. A French phrase, not to be equalled by one English word.

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be no medium. The choice must lie between exactness and variety, and it has been thought proper to sacrifice the one to the other; and to slacken severity, with a view of being more agreeable to lively spirits, always ready to fly from object to object; and too little attentive to be startled at a quick transition from one to the other, or at a want of regularity.

XVIII. The retrenchment of the Chorus has been again a ne- The Chorus.
cessary consequence to induce the French to take all sorts of subjects, and to load every action with events and surprizes: for how otherwise should these subjects, these surprizes, and these events, find room in a place exposed to the view of the courtiers, and the people, as long as the foundation of our tragedies turns only upon some particular affairs; in which neither the courtiers nor the people are seldom in the least interested? The Athenian spectators, accustomed to be involved in public affairs, had, in this instance, a quite different taste from the French spectators, who meddle not with any thing in their own happy and tranquil monarchy.

I do not speak of another reason for retrenching the Chorusses: it is this, they exact too great regularity for the composition of tragedy. The necessity of a Chorus would certainly have deprived us of a great number of magnificent subjects, which we see so happily, and so nobly treated. We have deprived ourselves of one benefit, to procure ourselves another, which we judge of more real consequence. Without examining here whether we have done right or wrong; or whether the inconvenience of confidents, and the loss of the most pompous part of the drama, are sufficiently recompensed by other advantages, let us content ourselves to pay our attention to this retrenchment of the Chorusses, to its course, and to its effects; and from thence we may be enabled to know, and to guide our opinion in the comparison of the theatres.

XIX. Another very considerable difference, which lies entirely Love.
on the side of the spectators, is gallantry and love. Among our Grecian poets there is scarce any of either. Their spectators,
more

more politic and ambitious, than tender and gallant, would in this point have been shocked as at an indignity, unworthy of the majesty of the tragic theatre. The overthrow of states, the splendor of republics, the flow of the great passions, were for them objects conformable to their proud and fierce character, which, at the same time, was polite. The French, whose politeness was less fierce and ambitious in the flourishing state of a monarchical government, fell by custom into a taste contrary to those composers of plays and romances, whose whole intention was to gain the suffrages of the sovereign arbitrators of taste. The Athenian women, as spectators, did not stamp the fashion of plays. A difference, so remarkable between them and us, that love often occupies three parts of a French tragedy; when the Greeks go on from one end to the other, by the sole power of action, which is the entire foundation of the piece.

Characters.

XX. The constant study of the poets * of different times to please their spectators, has again had a great influence in painting characters. Those personages, who appear in the English, Spanish, or French scenes, are more English, Spanish, or French characters, than they are Greeks or Romans; or, in a word, what they ought to be. Little discernment is necessary, to perceive that our Cæsars, and our Achilles's, while they still preserve part of their primitive character, assume the right of naturalization in the countries where they are transplanted, like the pictures drawn by the hand of a Fleming, Italian, or Frenchman, which all bear the impression of their own country. They are desirous to please their own nations; and nothing pleases more than a resemblance of manners and genius. The Grecian poets, having had none but Greeks, or neighbouring barbarians to paint, have had the less pains and difficulty in painting characters entirely true, and without mixture or alteration. Perhaps too they have used their utmost endeavours to apply their minds to so essential a part of the drama.

The common character of the tragic poets.

XXI. Let us take up our first intentions, and after having distinguished what the modern and antient theatre have in common, and in particular, in regard to the taste of the antient and modern

* Dramatic Poets.

spectators ; let us then see what appears most striking to the same set of men (the French for example) in the Grecian and French tragedies, be it good, or be it bad. From hence we shall perceive the common character of the antient and modern tragedies.

The intervention of gods is one of the hinges of the Grecian tragedy, as it is also of the epic poetry. There are few pieces in which the gods, mingled with men, do not act their part ; and (what most disgusted Monsieur St. Evremont) the gods always appeared with passions entirely human. They are beneath men, except their dignity of gods ; and there again they appear only men exalted to divinity. The French scenes have not admitted them, or have confined them to the opera and the comedies ; and have, with great judgment, paid regard to *the probable* of their own age. The morals and the ideas being changed, it would have been ridiculous to pretend to make the French look upon pagan divinities with Grecian eyes. Racine, himself, who was so great a lover of the Grecian taste, has employed these divinities indirectly only, and without making them appear. As for example, Neptune and Venus in his Phædra : but if we agree that these gods would have had a bad effect at this day, we must not conclude that it was so heretofore. The decision even of Monsieur St. Evremont, and his partizans, is too vehement, when they blame in general the christian poets, for having perpetuated the pagan fable. The country of fable, considered as fable, is so fertile in poetic beauties, that to be willing to banish it from poetry, would be to deprive poetry of her richest territory. Besides, this fabulous country is an universal climate, where the poets of all nations being become cotemporaries, may meet together as citizens, and understand each other, without the assistance of an interpreter. The christian religion is too venerable, and its mysteries are too sublime, to furnish for poetry a supplement to fable, as with Monsieur St. Evremont, and some as bad poets as himself. True poets are far from allowing such a chimerical reformation : it is better to attend to Boileau *, who says very well,

Religion bears such mysteries sublime,
As suffer not the ornaments of rhyme.

* Boileau's art of poetry. Canto 3.

Nor let it be said, after a philosopher or geometrician has examined the greatest part of the antient fables, that they are offensive to good sense. If we look upon them with philosophic severity, their solidity will not be found to be very great; but their *marvellous* has the air of enchantment, and this enchantment is received by the whole world. It is a stile, and that is sufficient, to justify fables from the crime of offending against good sense; and it is still a stronger reason why they appear no strangers in the Grecian tragedies, where they have been incorporated, after having reigned in epic poetry, the only source of tragedy. In short, whatever may be the impressi^on they make upon us, it is most certain that the antient theatre admitted them as an ornament; and that the modern theatre never admits them, but with the utmost precaution.

It is not that our French tragedies, stript as they are of the *marvellous*, have less nobleness and grandeur: on the contrary, it is in this particular that they are most remarkable. With what amazing pomp does our elevated theatre appear, exalted above the Roman grandeur by the great Corneille! The *marvellous*, extinct to others, revives for us; and revives the more divinely, as the new life contains more magnificence than the old. Were the Romans ever so majestic in their own sentiments and ideas, as they appear to be upon our theatre? What depth of policy! what refinement of pride! Are they the heroes of this world? Are they the genii of another world? Every thing trembles, every thing bends before them: and they think kings honoured, when trampled under their feet.

But again, what a different kind of noble elegance in Racine? when he calls us to the world which we inhabit, without elevating us to that higher universe, which is only the property of Corneille. With what charms does he [Racine] make us behold ourselves in those whom he presents to us! In what colours does he know how to heighten and embellish the objects, yet still in such a manner, that we know them! Would not the heroes of antiquity, celebrated as they are in the Grecian tragedies, be most agreeably surpris^d to find themselves so exalted by new manners, which, in truth, were unknown to them; but which by no means misbecomes

becomes them? It must be allowed, in laying aside certain defects that may sometimes be necessary, that the French theatre has an air of dignity and elegance, which is appropriated to itself, and by which it is characterized: and this air covers so well the defects, that they disappear almost entirely in the scenery; however visible they may be to those who examine them in reading. This is a point which ought to be observed by foreign critics, whose criticisms, dwelling only upon the faults, and not putting the beauties into the ballance, find themselves mistaken in the representation of the plays of Corneille and Racine. Let the two poets only shew themselves, and all their critics will become admirers and partizans.

Heretofore it was so with the Grecian poets: but they cannot expect the same indulgence at this day, when the antient manners are become as odious and barbarous, as the modern manners are personally dear to us. There is a singular characteristic, which reaches us even across these antique manners, and which we cannot but taste, if we are not deprived of all taste: but, indeed, it is neither that nobleness, that pomp, nor that elegant and refined magnificence of sentiments which our own theatre illustrates. All this is very perceptible, and we see the characters reduced to the bounds of simple nature, and disrobed of the brilliancy appropriated to monarchies, and of that art which education adds to nature. In recompence of these defects, simplicity, regularity, truth, justness of conduct, and of passions, are the stamps which mark the antient tragedies. The whole territory of Nature, in all her purity and beauty, is there exposed to view; but with a distinction, a delicacy, and an innocence, that appear to owe nothing to art. If we put aside usages and manners, Oedipus, Philoctetes, Iphigenia, Hippolitus, are works divine; and by bestowing upon them that appellation, Scaliger cannot have said too much. I am not afraid that my judicious readers will dissent from me in this point, especially those whose judgment shall be sufficiently fortified to raise them above the prejudices of custom. Such readers will find this general character in the beauties of antiquity. A character simple and noble, more noble from being simple: destitute of all borrowed

rowed ornaments, and episodes: true to nature; and so just in the exertion of the passions, that the soul of the spectator is always struck by them in the right place; not in the wrong, as the French scenes are often apt to do.

The particular character.

XXII. Through this general character, may be often perceived in our three Grecian poets, certain differences, that form to each a particular character. As also to each dramatic master in the French scenes, a particular character may be assigned. Corneille, for example, after having opened to himself a new career, (and if I may dare to say) a new heaven, and roads unknown to the antients, may be compared to an eagle, who shoots himself up to the clouds by his sublimity, his force, his uninterrupted course, and the rapidity of his flight. Racine again, by following in a new manner the traces of the antients, may be compared to the swans, who sometimes hover in the air, sometimes rise, sometimes fall, ever with a grace that belongs only to themselves. Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, have, in the same particular manner, their progress, and their conduct*.

* Cicero, in his third book of Oratory, says, "Sculpture is but one and the same art: But Myron, Polycletes, and Lycippus, who have excelled in it, have been very different in their manner; yet so like themselves, that it was impossible not to know them. It is the same thing in painting. Zeuxis, Appelles, Aglaophon, cannot be said to resemble each other; yet they are all most perfect in their kind. Now if this is as wonderful as true in the silent arts, if I may talk in that style, how much more is it so in discourse, which, although it is composed exactly of the same words, and the same sentences, still admits these differences? Differences that will not allow that one thing is good, and the other bad; but that in different kinds, all things are good and commendable. The poets are a most evident proof of this fact; for we see a wide difference between Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and yet almost the same praises attend them, each in his kind."

This passage is the explanation of all the difficulties concerning taste, and shews

plainly that taste is not arbitrary. All the manners of painting are good: yes, when they equally participate of a good taste. It is the same in style. So that where it is said, that you must imitate in eloquence the style of Cicero, or of Demosthenes, it is not meant that you must grossly copy their manner, but you must take that periodical taste, which was nourished and prevalent in those excellent ages in which they lived; nor will it be an hindrance to your, having a manner of your own. Patru, Le Maître, Pellisson, &c. have put this rule in practice.

It is a reproach often cast upon the poets, that they do not follow truth in the characters which they form: but they shew plainly that they form those characters either as they ought to be, or as they are. And to this purpose Sophocles and Euripides answered their censors; Sophocles by saying, that he made his heroes as they ought to be; and Euripides, that he made them as they are. Aristot. Art of Poetry, chap. 26. This saying has been applied to Corneille and Racine.

The

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The first [Æschylus] being the inventor and father of Tragedy, is a torrent that rolls over rocks, forests, and precipices. The second [Sophocles] is a canal, which waters delicious gardens: and the third [Euripides] is a river, which does not always form its course in a strait line; but takes delight in serpentine itself thro' fields enamelled with flowers. All the three have done for tragedy what the fable says the gods did in favour of Pandora. Æschylus, who first opened the blossoms of tragedy, gave her an air a little rude, marked her with strokes too strong, made her advance too hastily, and assigned to her a gigantic appearance, rather than the appearance of an heroine. Sophocles reduced her (according to the expression of Horace) to the decent appearance, in which we have already described her, of a matron. Euripides again, in giving her new graces, made her sometimes a little philosophical.

All these characters being once supposed, and well established in the pieces which will be seen here translated, it will be easily perceived how far to carry the comparison, and what ought to be the result of it. I have touched but slightly on all these articles, that the thread of none of them might be lost, and that they might lead the nearer to the parallel.

XXIII. First, the antient and the modern theatre both agree, The parallel of the two. that no feigned subjects, born purely from the imagination of the poet, shall be allowed: but they differ essentially in the choice both of the historical and fabulous subjects. All subjects are acceptable to the French, provided that they are tragical, and capable of that sort of regularity which custom has judged sufficient. As to the Grecians, they accept of no subjects but such as can be allied to the rigor of the three unities and the chorus. The first scarce will bear foreign subjects; the second will accept of none but domestic subjects, drawn from their antient and modern annals. Each taste is founded in reason; each proceeds from the difference of geniusses, and the difference of interests that subsist between a monarchical and a republican state. There is no room, therefore, to dispute either with the antients and the moderns, upon

the comparison of subjects. Are our sources then more copious than those of the Greeks? That appears at first sight; since it is evident that the whole universe (especially since the part which the Romans have played upon the theatre of the world) must furnish many more materials for the theatre, than a little corner of the earth, such as Greece, and its neighbourhood. But if we consider the prodigious number of tragedies drawn from that spot, and produced from the single pen only of our three Grecian poets, the titles of which, are in some measure, come down to us, we shall suspend our judgment. That country affords more gold than the rest of the world: this is the state of Greece, in respect to subjects for tragedy. Its fable, mixed with its history, is an inexhaustible source: but not to insist further on this point, all that can be granted to the modern theatre in regard to subjects, is, that variety which may be drawn from the manners. When a variety of nations, Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, Turks, are to be admitted into the scenery, at least the customs of each are to be varied: this is an advantage to our theatre which the antients seem to have disclaimed.

Secondly, As to the personages, such as gods, kings, heroes, and the subalterns: that again is an article which can, by no means, enter into the comparison, considering the different ideas arising from fable, heroism, and royalty. Who knows if at the same time, when we, who are sole judges between ourselves and the Grecians, are condemning them so furiously, as defective in point of their manner; they themselves, supposing them returned to this world, would not in their turn condemn us upon that mad height of our ideas, which seems to disdain nature and humanity? And which of the two must be thought in the right? Let us not cavil upon the parallel of ideas and manners. If we are resolved to compare the two theatres in that point, the modern theatre will, undoubtedly, carry it against the antient, according to the judgment of the present ideas.

Thirdly, The advantage will be different in regard to the œconomy, and the conduct of the pieces. The frequent defects of unity, of connection, and of the art of making the actors to go

in and out, and the eternal episodes, give undoubtedly an incontestable superiority to the Grecian tragedy.

Fourthly, From hence arises another superiority not less valuable, and which is the effect of the simplicity of the Grecian pieces, where the imagination is not ever led astray. In our dramas it deviates from the principal object: but what is still more remarkable, the exertion of the passions is conducted with more exactness, wisdom, and truth, by that very simplicity. Upon the first reading of the Greek poets, this is a remark that cannot fail to strike us.

Fifthly, As the Chorus has its advantages and inconveniencies, it is a thing that ought to be struck out of the comparison. The modern theatre, by throwing it aside, gains a greater number of fine subjects: but by way of retaliation, it loads itself with confidants, and thence loses the continuance of the action; and a most magnificent shew, which served to sustain that action, and which is, if I may say so, the ground-work, or keeping * of the picture.

Sixthly, As to that gallantry, which the antient theatre rejected, and which the French theatre makes her chief point, good sense and reason, in spite of the reigning taste, must put themselves on the side of the Greeks: for, besides the inconceivable scandal which christians give, by being less scrupulous upon the purity of the theatre than pagans: if we have any elevation of sentiment, must we not be shocked to see tragedy degraded by a vain tenderness, that has nothing in it serious? and whose sole art, notwithstanding the manner in which it is employed, consists in continually stopping the impression which terror and pity, or the principal passions of the piece, ought to make. Can those passions produce a lasting effect, and leave a *long remembrance* (as Boileau expresses it) behind them, while they are interrupted by eight or ten scenes of gallantry? The exertion of the theatrical passion consists in discovering itself by a chain of impressions, which insensibly carry it to its end: but love interrupts this chain every

* *Accompagnement.*

instant, and the first impression is effaced by scenes of gallantry. The Greeks took care not to disturb their action in that manner, by whining tenderesses. It cost them, therefore, much more pains to nourish a piece by its own juice, and give it just proportion, than it cost the present moderns to adjust a simple action, by the means of episodes, and events of love. Yet, far from knowing their inducements, we continue to blame the antients in that very point which renders them estimable. Is not the force of genius more apparent, by following the thread of a passion during five acts, and always encreasing it, than by sewing together several foreign bits, to fill up that length of action? Certainly we should have declared, that this new method was introduced for want of breath and strength in the poets, had not Corneille, the strongest and steadiest of the tragic geniusses, have followed it, much more by deference to the age in which he lived, than by taste: and how much discretion has he used in introducing it! If love makes a great part in his pieces, at least it is not the principal part. It appears often subservient, and ever the minister and slave of ambition.

Seventhly, At length to finish by the characters: it cannot be denied that the Greeks have marked them with an air of truth, in a stronger manner than the French; though it may be said, perhaps in defence of the latter, that what they have done has been to please their spectators, the reason of which I shall not repeat.

The conclusion.

XXIV. It is evident, therefore, that we are to compare the antient theatre with the modern in all times, by nature, and not by those circumstances which are added from age to age by custom, and education. Upon that footing they may be looked upon as two species entirely different in some respects; and consequently little susceptible of a very exact comparison, since the impression depends upon a certain total, which contains imitation both of nature, and of things, added to it, or taken from it, by different *eras*. Whoever has so fine an eye as to discern the resources of this impression, will undoubtedly find that our theatre is more noble in its manners; and that the Grecian theatre is not less so from nature.

PARALLEL OF THE THEATRES. cxix

nature. The one is more loaded, the other more simple. The one is less regular, the other more exact. The first is more interesting, the second more moving. This is more fiery and sublime, that is more animated and more natural.

The Grecian theatre must be regarded as an antique statue with wet garments, little ornamented indeed; but yet plain and genuine. The French theatre as a modern statue, whose attitudes and drapery are more magnificent and rich, but less alluring and genuine. If we are to believe Monsieur de St. Evremont: "With us what ought to be tender, is often only soft; what ought to produce pity, scarce moves tenderness: emotion holds the place of surprize; and astonishment of horror. Our sentiments are not sufficiently deep. The passions being but half touched, incite in our souls but imperfect movements, and neither remain in their own situation, nor are totally drawn out from it." This is not always true: for whoever pushed a passion farther than Corneille, especially in the particular dialogues where a contest is represented? We may rather complain of the contrary effect, and say passion is overstrained. To what height does not Cleopatra carry it in Rodogune?

"Our heroines lament too much, or breathe out their anger in too fine sentiments for real grief." This is another reproach of Monsieur St. Evremont. This, too much or too little, are the appurtenances of that taste, which has exalted the modern theatre. Justice and truth, circumstances so cherished by the antients, divide them. Passion is raised by them; but that passion has its original, its extent, its bounds, and its expressions, exactly as in nature. It is a picture of which the simplicity, the life, and the resemblance, make the chief merit. Ours is a more brilliant picture, where the strokes are bolder. If this last strikes and seizes us more, the former ought no less to engage and please us. What one loses by a rigorous examination from reason, the other gains by the very same examination; and this is the fate of all fine things. The more we examine them with critical eyes, the more fine they appear: but as in this place the preference is not to be considered, nor even a rigid comparison made of the two theatres, which

which have so little relation to each other; it is enough to make known how, and in what way we may compare them, to judge better of the one which is less known, by the contrast of the other, which is more known. This is the whole advantage that I have offered to procure for the Grecian theatre, without any prejudice to the French theatre. It will be a most material point, if, by these means, I have given my readers a taste, and proper situation to judge by the authors themselves what proportion of esteem ought to be allowed to the Grecian theatre, without biasing the least in the world the admiration so justly due to the great masters of our scenes.

OEDIPUS.

THE SUBJECT

ADVERTISEMENT

OEDIPUS:

I have for the edition of that learned man, I was not
discouraged from attempting it after him. In the year
1750, there appeared another translation of Oedipus, by
the late M. Boissier, but mine being finished several years
before his, I thought myself obliged to give it to the public.

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.

sign, however, to draw any comparison between his perfor-
mance and my own, much less to pretend to any superiority
over a man of such acknowledged merit.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE Oedipus of Sophocles has been translated by M. Dacier: yet, notwithstanding the sincere veneration I have for the abilities of that learned man, I was not discouraged from attempting it after him. In the year 1729, there appeared another translation of Oedipus, by the late M. Boivin, but mine being finished several years before his, I thought myself obliged to give it to the public without making any alteration in it: it is not my design, however, to draw any comparison between his performance and my own, much less to pretend to any superiority over a man of such acknowledged merit.

The

The S U B J E C T.

M. DACHÉ, who translated *Œdipus* before me, has with great clearness explained in a few words, all that history furnished the poet with in this piece, and all that the poet has added to history.

“ The kingdom of Thebes * being laid waste by a dreadful plague, messengers were sent to consult the Oracle of Apollo. The answer they brought back was, That the plague would never cease till the death of Laius was revenged upon *Œdipus* his son, and his murderer. This Oracle being examined and explained, *Œdipus* was found to be that very son of Laius and Jocasta, who having by the command of his parents been exposed as soon as born, was preserved by some shepherds, and carried to Polybus king of Corinth †, who educated him as his own son. After this discovery, Jocasta in despair hanged herself, *Œdipus* tore out his eyes, and was banished from Thebes. Such were the materials with which the Grecian history supplied Sophocles. The Episodes, that is, the circumstances of time, place, and persons which the poet made use of to extend and amplify his action, are his own. These circumstances are, the assembly of the priests, who followed by great numbers of children, go and prostrate themselves at the foot of an altar which had been erected to *Œdipus* in the court of his palace. The sacrifices offered in every part of the city, the ambiguity of the Oracle ‡, the rage of *Œdipus* against Tiresias, his unjust suspicions of Creon, the quarrel between these two princes, the interposition of Jocasta, who endeavours to appease them, the uneasiness and anxiety she raises in the mind of *Œdipus* by her attempts to calm his inquietudes, the arrival of the Corinthian shepherd, who comes to bring him intelligence of the death of Polybus, and who, to banish his fears and apprehensions, believing that the news would be welcome, discovers to him that the king and queen of Corinth are not his parents; the obstinacy of *Œdipus*, in resolving to know his birth, notwithstanding all the efforts of Jocasta to dissuade him from the inquiry, the deposition of Laius’s shepherd, who had been commanded to expose him: in a word, all the circumstances of Jocasta’s death, and the punishment of *Œdipus*.—All these are added by the poet, whose design is to shew, that curiosity, pride, violence and rage, bring on inevitable misfortunes upon men, who otherwise possess the most shining qualities.”

* The capital of Boetia, the nearest province to Attica.

† A celebrated city in the Isthmus of Peloponnesus.

‡ The Oracle of Delphos, a city and temple of Apollo, at the foot of mount Parnassus in Phocis.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

OEDIPUS king of Thebes in Beotia.

The HIGH-PRIEST of Jupiter.

CREON the brother of Jocasta.

The CHORUS, composed of old men of Thebes*.

TIRESIAS, a prophet.

JOCASTA, the widow of Laius, and wife of Oedipus.

An OFFICER in the court of Oedipus.

An OLD SHEPHERD, who had the charge of Laius's flock.

MUTE PERSONS.

A Crowd of Children who attend the high-priest.

Two Sons of Oedipus.

The Scene is in Thebes, before the palace of Oedipus.

* Mr. Dacier insists, that the chorus is composed of the sacrificers belonging to the several temples in Thebes. He founds this opinion upon two passages of Sophocles: one, act the first, scene the first, in which the high-priest says to Oedipus, *Behold the sacrificers bending under the weight of years, οἱ δὲ οὖν γῆρα βαρύνει ἱερῆς*. The other, act the fourth, scene the fourth, where Oedipus speaking to the chorus, says, *Ob ye elders! ἀγχιβύς*. This only proves that they are old men; besides, Henry Stephens reads *αγχιβύς*, which admits of another sense. How-

ever, the first passage only shews, that in the first scene the stage is filled with sacrificers and priests: but this passage does not prove that these old men who appear at first are the chorus, any more than it makes the children who accompany them the chorus. But from a passage still clearer than this, I am inclined to believe, that the chorus is formed of the most considerable men among the Thebans; for Jocasta calls them *ἄνδρες*, the principal citizens of Thebes. I may venture to declare, that I made this remark before I read M. Boivin.

OEDIPUS:

OEDIPUS:

A

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.

A C T the F I R S T.

SCENE the F I R S T*.

OEDIPUS, his TRAIN, the HIGH-PRIEST, a
Crowd of CHILDREN.

OEDIPUS.

UNHAPPY infants, ye tender race of ancient Cadmus, say,
what misfortune assembles you in this place? what mean
these fillets†, these boughs, and all these symbols of sup-
pliants? Thebes is filled with the smoke of incense: every place
resounds with cries and supplications. What a sight is this for
Oedipus! Yes, Thebans, this Oedipus your king, so celebrated
throughout the world, is come himself to be a melancholy witness
of your sorrows. I might have sent messengers to learn the cause of

* Nothing can be grander or more su-
perb than the opening of this scene. It
presents to view a large square, a palace, an
altar at the gate of the palace of Oedipus,
a great number of old men and children
prostrate before it; and even, according to
the text, a whole people appear at a di-

stance surrounding the two temples of Pallas
and the altar of Apollo.

† The ancients, when they implored any
considerable favour either from the gods or
men, carried fillets and boughs in their hands,
or wore them on their heads.

these

these sad ceremonies; but I chose to hear it from yourselves. Do you then, reverend old man, speak for the rest. Tell me what is your design? what are your fears, or your griefs? are you terrified, or injured? I am ready to relieve you: ah, I should be insensible to the soft feelings of humanity, if I could behold unmoved a sight so affecting.

H I G H - P R I E S T.

Behold, great king, these crowds prostrate before thy altars. Behold these little suppliants, whose tender age still need the guiding hand to uphold their feeble steps. * Behold the sacrificers bending beneath the weight of years. Behold the chosen youth of Thebes: lastly, behold the high-priest of Jupiter the sovereign of the gods. The remainder of thy people with crowns upon their heads are dispersed about the square; some croud round the two temples of Pallas †: others press near the altars of Apollo ‡ upon the banks of the river. Thou knowest the cause of this extreme affliction. Alas! Thebes, almost overwhelmed with a flood of miseries, scarce raises her head above the deep abyss which surrounds her. Already the earth sees the young flocks and springing harvest perish, and infants are destroyed before the birth. A god, clad in flames, fires the city with a malignant pestilence, that destroys the inhabitants. Pluto, the gloomy Pluto, enriched by our woes, mocks at our groans and tears. The wretched Thebans press round the || altars of thy palace; thee we invoke, if not as a god, yet as the greatest amongst men, who alone art able to relieve our distresses, and appease the wrath of heaven. To thee, great prince, Thebes owes her deliverance from the horrid tribute

* M. Dacier, as well as others, had reason to be of a different opinion from the scholiast, who asserts, that this passage is δι' οὗ τῶν ἱερῶν ἐκείνων. Behold the sacrificers bending under the weight of years, ought to be only understood of the high-priest, who speaks of himself in the plural number; and thus he is the only old man who accompanies the children: but for this there is no foundation in the text. Mr. Dacier understands this passage in the same sense as seignor Orsatto Giustiniano, who translates it... *alcuni poi son sacerdoti d'anni gravi.*

† In Thebes there were two temples of Pallas: one was dedicated to Minerva the

Afflitor; the other to Minerva the *Ismenian*, from the river *Ismenus*, and *Cadmena* from *Cadmus*.

‡ In the Greek it is not altars, but the prophetic ashes of *Ismenus*; ashes, because the future was foretold in this temple by consulting the fire: *Ismenus*, because this temple stood upon the banks of the river.

|| Oedipus was considered as a divine person whose wisdom had already delivered Thebes from the Sphinx. This heightens the tragedy, since this Oedipus, adored by his people, was soon to become the object of their execration.

paid to the sphinx. The gods inspired thee then; and by them alone thou wert assisted. The Thebans honour and revere thee as their deliverer and their father. Thou art our only resource. Thus prostrate at thy feet we conjure thee to find some remedy for our miseries, such as the will of the gods may appoint, or the wisdom of men may suggest; for the counsels of wise men seldom fail to procure happiness. Make haste then, best of kings, make haste to save thy Thebes: restore to her her former lustre; and remember to what thou art bound by the benefits thou formerly conferredst on her. Thy subjects call thee their deliverer; but will not this glorious title be erased from their memories, if being once delivered by thee they are plunged into new and more dreadful calamities? Again, Oh prince, we conjure thee to save us. Resume that prudence, that wisdom, by which thou hast governed us under happier auspices. Be always equal to thyself; and remember, that if heaven reserves thee still to reign over this land, a kingdom destitute of subjects is equally useless to a king, as a fortress without soldiers, and a vessel without mariners.

OEDIPUS.

Alas! unhappy children*, I am not ignorant of your woes; yes, Thebans, I am but too well acquainted with your miserable condition. You weep, you groan; but in this general grief I suffer with you, and more than you; the public misfortunes fall with redoubled force upon your king. Oedipus alone bears all the weight of them. † That wisdom which you attribute to me slumbers not over your calamities: I needed not your cries and supplications to animate my cares for you. You have seen my tears: you have been witnesses of my anxiety: you are not ignorant that I have tried many methods to relieve you; one remedy remained, and that I have not neglected. ‡ Creon the brother of my queen is, in obedience to my orders, gone to the temple of Delphos, to enquire of the god by what means I may preserve my people. Anxious, I count the moments of his absence; but, alas! he returns not yet, though the destined time for his return is expired. But when he comes,

* Oedipus speaks here not only to the children but to the sacrificers and the people. He speaks as their common father, and therefore makes use of the term *waide*, which is applicable to every age.

† This is, in my opinion, the true sense

of Sophocles, which has escaped M. Dacier, who barely translates the passage thus, *Do not think that it is your cries which have roused me.*

M. Orsatto has given it the same sense.

‡ A Greek, the son of Menoclius.

if I do not, Oh ye Thebans, execute in every point the orders of Apollo, look upon me as the basest and most infamous of men.

H I G H - P R I E S T.

Thy words were a presage of good. These children inform me that Creon is arrived.

O E D I P U S.

Joy smiles upon his face. Oh may thy answer, great Apollo, confirm this omen of success.

H I G H - P R I E S T.

* The crown of laurel which adorns his head bodes happy news.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

C R E O N, &c.

O E D I P U S.

Restrain this eager impatience. He approaches.—Well, my dear Creon, what answer do you bring from the oracle? O speak!

C R E O N.

The answer is favourable; for calamities, if they end in good, may be termed felicities †.

O E D I P U S.

How? What meanst thou? these words give neither hope nor fear.

C R E O N.

Would you that I should explain myself in the presence of this assembly; or shall we retire into the palace?

O E D I P U S.

No; speak before the people: their interest is dearer to me than my own.

* When the person who was sent to consult the oracle at Delphos returned crowned with laurel, it was a sign that he had received a favourable answer.

† Creon, by speaking in this enigmatical manner, excites the curiosity and attention of the audience.

C R E O N.

OEDIPUS.

9

CREON.

Hear then the answer of the God; he declares plainly, that we must extirpate from this land, the monster whom it has too long nourished.

OEDIPUS.

Who is this monster? what expiation does the Deity demand?

CREON.

The death or banishment of the criminal: blood, unjustly shed, cries loud for vengeance.

OEDIPUS.

But who is the murderer? Name him, name the wretch who has incurred the wrath of Apollo.

CREON.

The king who reigned in Thebes before you, Laius —

OEDIPUS.

I never saw that unhappy prince.

CREON.

He was murdered: his death is not revenged; and it is on the perpetrators of that crime that Apollo demands punishment.

OEDIPUS.

How, at this distance of time, shall we penetrate into the obscurity of that execrable fact? Where are the murderers?

CREON.

Here in Thebes, so says the God. Alledge not, prince, the difficulties that will attend our tracing this crime to its source. We find not what we seek but with diligence and care. Negligence only serves as a veil to conceal those impious actions which are still unpunished.

OEDIPUS.

Where was Laius murdered? In Thebes, or on his journey to some other place? was it in this country, or any other? answer me*.

CREON.

* " It is absolutely necessary, that in the incidents of which the fable is composed, there should be nothing improbable; or, if this cannot be wholly avoided
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ed, it should be managed in such a manner, that it may not enter into the piece itself, but be either antecedent to the action, or follow afterwards: and this rule
C
" Sophocles

O E D I P U S.

C R E O N.

Laius went from hence to consult the Oracle, and has never been heard of since.

O E D I P U S.

Did none of his train return, from whom we may procure some intelligence concerning this atrocious act?

C R E O N.

One man alone escaped; but from him we could learn no more than one slight circumstance.

O E D I P U S.

What circumstance? Let us neglect nothing; it often happens that the most inconsiderable incidents lead to a full discovery.

C R E O N.

According to his account, Laius was set upon by a band of robbers, and fell oppressed with numbers.

O E D I P U S.

† Can it be thought probable, that robbers would have dared to attack the sacred person of a king, had not some secret interest directed the attempt?

C R E O N.

Plots and ambushes were suspected; but after the king's death, we were plunged again into more dreadful miseries.

"Sophocles has with great judgment observed in his tragedy of Oedipus." *Arist. poet. chap. 16.*

M. Dacier, in his note upon this passage, says, "It was not probable that Oedipus should be so long the husband of Jocasta, without hearing from her the manner of Laius's death, and without causing the murder to be strictly enquired into; but because this subject, which is otherwise the finest imaginable, could not subsist without that improbability, Sophocles has made use of it, but with great propriety left it out of the action which makes the subject of his tragedy: this incident is related there as what has already happened, and before the com-

mencement of the action. The poet is answerable for such incidents only of which his fable is composed, but for none of those that either precede or follow it." This way of reasoning seems, in my opinion, to throw dust in the eyes, in order to hide a visible tho' necessary defect. I rather chuse to believe that Aristotle praised Sophocles for the judicious manner in which he has palliated this error, by making it in some degree so foreign to his action, that it would not be observed but upon reflection.

† By this passage it appears, that Oedipus already suspected Creon of having been concerned in the murder of Laius, to secure the crown to himself.

O E D I P U S.

What miseries could you be afflicted with so great, as to prevent you from using means to discover the murderers of your prince?

C R E O N.

‡ The Sphynx and her cruel snares, those known and present ills, buried in oblivion the past and the obscure.

O E D I P U S.

Well, be it my task to trace this secret guilt to its first source. Just are your orders, great Apollo. Your counsels, Creon, are wise, and I will follow them. In me Thebes shall find a deliverer; the Oracle an obedient prince, and Laius a revenger. To this my own interest obliges me. The cause of Laius is my own. If I punish not this execrable crime, I shall embolden rebels and perfidious subjects to practise on my life; by revenging him, I shall secure my crown. Rise, my children, and bear back these sacred boughs. [*To his train.*] And do you summon the people hither; all methods to relieve them shall be tried, and if the Gods are favourable to us, this day shall either terminate our miseries or our lives.

H I G H - P R I E S T.

Rise, tender suppliants, our prayers are granted. Oh! may Apollo confirm his gracious Oracle, and free us from our calamities.

~~*****~~

F I R S T I N T E R L U D E.

C H O R U S.

Oh, divine Oracle, which from the sacred * temple of Delphos has been so lately brought to Thebes, and holds our minds in

‡ The history of the Sphynx is well known: it was a monster composed of the different parts of an eagle, a lion, and a woman, who devoured such persons as could not explain her enigmas. Some authors say that this Sphynx was a powerful army, which had taken possession of Beotia, and ravaged the Theban territories, under the conduct of a wicked woman, whom Oedipus killed. Others relate, that the Sphynx was a natural daughter of Laius, who murdered those Thebans, that, to hinder

bastards from succeeding to the crown, quoted the oracle of Apollo to Cadmus, concerning the succession. This woman required that the oracle should be produced. Oedipus, instructed in a dream, repeated the oracle, and put his sister to death.

* The temple of Delphos, says the scholiast, was enriched with innumerable gifts, and afterwards the place from whence the oracles were delivered, was covered with tiles of gold, presented by Croesus.

anxious suspense, what is thy hidden purport? Alas, uncertain of our destiny, we groan, we tremble with our fears. All-powerful God! we adore thy impenetrable decrees. Oh, deign to unfold thy sacred meaning, great Oracle, immortal son of Hope. To you we first address our vows, oh Minerva, daughter of Jupiter; oh Diana, tutelary Goddess of this land, who art seated on a throne in the midst of Thebes: and thou, invincible Apollo, by whose inevitable darts the serpent Python was destroyed; Divinities benign, by whom the woes of mortals are relieved, compassionate our present sufferings. † If by your assisting hands the raging flame, that began to consume this city was extinguished, succour us now, immortal Gods. Alas! our miseries are without number. A whole nation becomes a victim to death, and descends to the silent tomb. Hope is no more; all help but your's is vain: the sterile earth denies her fruits, and mocks our useless toil. Pluto, the relentless Pluto, beholds the dead fall into the black waves of Styx, faster than the lightning's successive flashes; and, as a flight of birds whose numbers darken the air, they press each other down: the carcases of the dead, deprived of funeral rites, cover the ground in heaps; our wretched mothers die in the pangs of child-birth; our youthful brides and venerable matrons embrace the altars ‡ as a sacred assylum, and pierce the air with lamentations. Alas! what one night has spared, the following day destroys. Nothing is heard on every side but groans and funeral cries; and the name of Apollo, a thousand times invoked, mingles with our mournful cries. Oh Minerva, who beholdest the miseries of thy Thebes, deign to assist us! Drive hence this barbarous Divinity, this destroying Mars, more dreadful than the God of battles, by whom, with insatiate fury, the Thebans fall; but not with the pomp of war, the glittering helm and shield. Oh, drive him, Goddess, from this desolated land; plunge him in the vast bosom of Amphitrite, or in the immense depths of the Thracian sea. Great Jupiter, at whose command the thunders roll, strike this malignant Genii with your bolts. Oh Lycian Apollo, bring to our aid thy bow, thy golden quiver, and thy inevitable darts. And thou, Diana *, hurl at him those fierce beams,

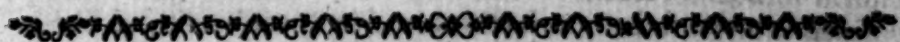
† By inspiring Oedipus, when he delivered Thebes from the Sphynx.

‡ Otherwise, Embrace the altars upon the banks of the river; *ἀντὶ τῶν ποταμῶν*.

This sense is perhaps the most exact, but the other is the most beautiful.

* Diana, or Hecate, was supposed, as well as Bacchus, to fire the minds of mortals

beams, which, like flaming arrows, thou darest upon the mountains of Lycia †; be at length propitious to our vows, thou God, that deignest to bear the name of Theban. Thee whom we adorn with a golden tiara, oh chief of the Bacchanals, powerful Bacchus ‡, bring hither thy flaming torches, and free us from this horrible Divinity.



A C T the S E C O N D.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

O E D I P U S, his T R A I N, the C H O R U S, the P E O P L E assembled before the Palace ||.

O E D I P U S speaking to the P E O P L E.

I Have heard your demands, oh Thebans; now in your turn listen to your king. Assist my endeavours to relieve you, and I dare promise you success. I, who am no native of Thebes, am free from all suspicion of having murdered Laius, and am ignorant even of the circumstances of his death: I shall declare my sentiments therefore plainly. Think you I would recall to remembrance a crime so long buried in oblivion, if I had not certain evidence of it. Know therefore, Thebans, that Oedipus, a stranger once, but now your fellow-citizen, and obedient to those laws which he himself prescribes †, commands you to name the murderer of Laius ‡. If the fear of death deters the criminal from confession, let him lay aside that fear; banishment shall be all that

tals with frenzy. This sense is more natural than that which Dacier gives to this passage.

† A province in Asia, situated between Caria and Pamphilia, which takes its name from Lycus, one of the sons of Pandion.

‡ M. Dacier says, that the Chorus invoke Bacchus with his flaming torches, because wine and fire are preservatives against the plague. But, without supposing any concealed elegance, it is sufficient to say, that in Thebes Bacchus was honoured with a peculiar worship; and that the Chorus invoke him here in common with the other Gods of the country.

|| This act opens with no less magnificence than the former. The people, according to the commands of Oedipus, assemble before the palace, to hear his last resolution, and his orders concerning the Oracle, and the methods that were to be used to discover the murderer of Laius.

† I have added this word to the text to explain the sense. Sophocles would have us understand, that Oedipus resolves to submit to the orders he is about to give; and comprehends himself in the curses he is going to pronounce.

‡ In the original, *the son of Labdacus*, and grandson of Cadmus.

we

we will inflict on him. If he is a stranger, discover him: a service of such importance shall be nobly rewarded; but if fear, or what is more powerful than either fear or duty, through friendship you conceal this fatal secret, hear, Thebans, hear the imprecation * and the orders of your king. Let not the impious wretch be admitted to the sacrifices, nor mix in social converse with you, share nothing in common with him, not even the lustral water †; it is my command that you banish him from your houses, as a monster, who will draw down the wrath of heaven upon you. Such are the orders of the oracle; and thus I begin to execute them, and revenge your murdered prince. May the criminal, whether this horrible parricide was his act alone, or whether he had accomplices in it, suffer all the fatal effects of those curses I now pour upon him. May he drag a miserable life, driven out from human society, without dwelling, without hope, and destitute of all relief. If knowingly I shelter him in my palace, may those dreadful imprecations I have pronounced, fall on myself and family. Hear me then, ye Thebans: I command you by that obedience you owe me as your king, by the respect due to the sacred Oracle, by your affection for your country, thus miserably defaced, to perform with the utmost exactness, the orders I have just given you. For although the Gods themselves had not spoke thus painfully, is it fit a crime so shocking should remain unpunished? Does not the blood of the best of men, the best of kings, speak plain enough? Should he not have been revenged? I who am the successor of so good a prince, possessed of his wife and throne, the father ‡ and the guardian of his children, if the fates had not snatched them from us, I will regard him as a father; yes, in this cause, I will act with redoubled vigilance; my soul shall

* These imprecations, and these orders, give us a very natural description of the excommunication of the ancients, which in the pagan religion was a dreadful punishment. Euripides gives a more particular account of it in his *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

† The lustral water was made use of to purify the people at the sacrifices: they dip'd their hands into it, a flaming brand was thrown into it, and it was afterwards sprinkled upon the assembly.

‡ He speaks here of himself without knowing it, that is, of the son of Laius.

M. Dacier, with great reason, finds fault with the scholiast for saying, that there is something trivial in these thoughts. However, the scholiast adds, that they are very well calculated to move the passions, and that Euripides is full of them, whereas Sophocles makes use of them sparingly, and never but when he would raise concernment in the audience; and it must be acknowledged, that this thought of Oedipus is very likely to produce that effect. He resolves to revenge him as a father, whose son and murderer he at last discovers himself to be.

not taste of peace till I have discovered the impious murderer of the dear remains * of Labdacus, of the Polydores, of Cadmus, and Agenor. I owe this vengeance to their manes; as for those who refuse their consent to this just sentence, may the earth be ever barren, and deceive their useless labours; may they behold their wives expire without having known the soft name of mother; and may they perish themselves by a death more horrid (if possible) than that which depopulates this unhappy land. But for such as yield a ready obedience to my will, may justice combat in their cause; and oh, ye immortal Gods, be favourable to Thebes!

C H O R U S.

Oh king, we submit most willingly to your imprecations; but innocent as we are of the murder, we know not the perpetrator of it; the God, who gave the Oracle, only can explain it, and discover him.

O E D I P U S.

You say well, but what mortal can constrain the Gods to unfold their secrets?

C H O R U S.

There is yet another resource †.

O E D I P U S.

Speak what is it; if any expedient presents itself to your thoughts, conceal it not.

C H O R U S.

The sage Tiresias ‡, he who is among mortals what Apollo is with the Gods; may not his divine foreknowledge reveal this mystery?

* It appears that the people retire after having received the king's orders; the Chorus, composed of the oldest and most respectable Thebans, remain, and answer for the people.

† Literally, Hear a second counsel, &c. Oedipus replies, Give me a third, if you are able. M. Orsatto Giustiniano translates it, *Giungi la terza anchora se in pronto l'hai.*

‡ Tiresias was a native of Thebes in Beotia, the son of Everus and Cariclo. He happened to see Pallas when she was bathing; and, according to Callimachus and

Propertius, was punished for it by the loss of his sight; a less punishment than that inflicted on Acteon. The goddess had compassion on him afterwards, and bestowed on him the power of divination. Ovid says, that it was Juno who struck him with blindness, for having, in a dispute between her and Jupiter, which was by their mutual consent submitted to his arbitration, decided it in favour of the God, who, to make him some reparation for the loss of his sight, granted him the knowledge of futurity.

O E D I P U S.

Nor has this method escaped my labouring * thought; twice by the counsel of Creon have I sent for him; 'tis strange he appears not yet.

C H O R U S.

Let Tiresias be consulted then; for many reports have formerly been spread concerning this parricide, of little consequence indeed, and which did not seem to merit any attention.

O E D I P U S.

Say what were those reports; I would have nothing neglected.

C H O R U S.

It was said that the king was assassinated by travellers.

O E D I P U S.

This I also have heard; but, as yet, no one has appeared who was an eye-witness of the fact.

C H O R U S.

The terror of those curses which you have pronounced, will certainly produce them; and doubt not but the guilty wretch himself, impelled by his fears, will soon appear before you.

O E D I P U S.

They who fear not to be wicked, but little fear my curses.

C H O R U S.

He comes who will reveal this secret criminal; the divine prophet approaches, he to whom all things are known, he will unfold the truth.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

To them T I R E S I A S.

O E D I P U S.

Oh thou who, though deprived of sight, yet canst penetrate into the secrets both of heaven and earth, to thee thy miserable country has recourse; thou only art able to deliver her. Apollo

* In the Greek it is, *I have sent two messengers to him—by Creon's advice.* This hint is not unuseful, for it lays a foundation for those suspicions which Oedipus entertains of Creon, and which the audience is afterwards not surprised to hear him aver.

has declared, that our calamities shall not cease till the murderers of Laius are either put to death or banished. Let the sacred mysteries of thy art be all employed to discover them; mark the flight of birds, exert the whole power of divination; refuse not, to thy fellow-citizens, the assistance they expect from thee. Thou art our only hope; preserve thy country, preserve thy king; revenge a prince, whose blood unjustly shed, draws upon us the wrath of Heaven; and oh, remember, that nothing is so glorious as to succour the wretched.

TIRESIAS, *aside*.

Oh, Gods! how dangerous it is to know too much! I am undone; wretch that I am, why came I hither?

OEDIPUS.

What means this sudden grief and consternation?

TIRESIAS.

Suffer me to retire, prince: believe Tiresias, it will be best both for you and me.

OEDIPUS.

Unjust and cruel! Have you then forgot that Thebes is your country? will you not, at her intreaties, explain the Oracle?

TIRESIAS.

You, prince, are more unjust than me. I am silent because I would not answer rashly to your rash demands.

CHORUS.

Tiresias, in the name of the Gods, conceal not from us what you know. Thus prostrate at your knees, we conjure you to speak.

TIRESIAS.

Alas! you are ignorant of what you ask: suffer the secret to remain with me; I would not unfold your miseries.

OEDIPUS.

How! you know then who the murderer is, and yet you are silent. Is it your wish that we should perish?

TIRESIAS.

Unjust reproach! It is for your sake, for my own, that I am silent; let us spare each other mutual ruin. I will not speak.

OEDIPUS.

Who can bear this unmoved? Oh! wretch, impious and base, how long wilt thou be thus inexorable?

TIRESIAS.

You upbraid me with my cruelty, yet blush not for the unjust rage with which you are transported. I am the victim of it.

OEDIPUS.

Is it possible to hear thee without rage? Think what an injury thou offerest to thy country.

TIRESIAS.

You will know your misfortunes too soon, I need not reveal them.

OEDIPUS.

These misfortunes I would learn from thy mouth.

TIRESIAS.

Although you should load me with your severest vengeance, I will not speak.

OEDIPUS.

The fury thou hast raised shall be let loose upon thee; yes, I declare it to thee, thou art, in my opinion, an accomplice in this parricide, nay, the author of it. Wert thou not deprived of sight, I should believe thy hand alone accomplished it.

TIRESIAS.

* I hear you, and in my turn, oh Oedipus, I declare, that you have yourself pronounced your sentence. Yes, from this fatal moment, no Theban can hold converse with you; you are the murderer of Laius.

OEDIPUS.

I Laius's murderer! oh Gods! Traitor, thinkest thou to escape my vengeance for this black imposture?

* The rage with which Oedipus is transported, justifies the prophet for speaking thus plainly to him: and this scene is conducted with such art, that Tiresias unfolds to the king his whole destiny, without the least disguise; while Oedipus has reason to think that all is the effect of his resentment, and of the plot he had laid before, and the rather, as he believes himself to be the son of Polybus, king of Corinth, and not of Laius.

TIRESIAS.

OEDIPUS.

19

TIRESIAS.

I fear it not; truth shall triumph over injustice, and defend me from your wrath.

OEDIPUS.

The truth! Ah wretch, whence knowest thou the truth? Thy art, blind prophet, hath not discovered it to thee.

TIRESIAS.

From yourself I know it; and it is you who have obliged me to break silence.

OEDIPUS.

Have I obliged thee to accuse me! Repeat then what thou hast said; perhaps I may begin to comprehend thee.

TIRESIAS.

You have heard too much*, mean you to lay a snare for me, by continuing to question me thus?

OEDIPUS.

I tell thee no, but I command thee to speak.

TIRESIAS.

Well then, I repeat it, the murderer whom you seek is yourself.

OEDIPUS.

Again, base man! thou shalt not twice insult me with impunity.

TIRESIAS.

Oh Heaven! what would his fury be, were I to discover all?

OEDIPUS.

Say all thou knowest, I have nothing to fear.

TIRESIAS.

Thus urged I will speak. Oedipus, without knowing it, is engaged in an impious union; he is ignorant of the dreadful abyss into which he is plunged.

OEDIPUS.

Thinkest thou I will longer bear these repeated outrages?

* Mean you to lay a snare for me? that is, you would know whether I shall vary in what I have said.

OEDIPUS.

TIRESIAS.

I fear thee not, such is the force of Truth.

OEDIPUS.

Yes, but Truth is not upon thy lips. Thou doubly blind, thou hast not eyes to see her, nor wisdom to discover her.

TIRESIAS.

Ah, wretched prince! Soon, very soon, will the calamity with which you reproach me be your own.

OEDIPUS.

Go, thank the Gods thou art blind; for otherwise this day should be the last of thy life.

TIRESIAS.

My life is not in your hands. Apollo is my guard, he will preserve it †.

OEDIPUS.

Hast thou joined with Creon, to contrive this base artifice?

TIRESIAS.

Accuse neither of us; your miseries proceed from yourself alone.

OEDIPUS.

Oh crown! oh scepter! oh wisdom, sacred treasure, whose dictates have more power to make life happy, than all the arts of divination; how are these blessings, by being too much exposed to the malignant darts of envy, subjected to a fatal change! To Thebes I came without ambition, without design; the throne is offered me, I accept it, and I reign. Creon, this Creon, who seemed at first to be the most faithful of my friends, forms secret plots to deprive me of the crown; he suborns this wretched priest, blind in his art, and only wise for his own interests; Creon employs his artifices and delusions, and against whom? against Oedipus, his friend; for say, thou dotard, who made thee a prophet? why

† I have preferred this sense to that which Joachim Camerarius gives to the Greek, as if Tiresias had said, *Apollo will terminate my destiny*. Tiresias, indeed, according to Pausanias, died on his journey to Delphos, after having drank of a certain fountain; but this circumstance does

not prove that Camerarius's translation is exact; the other is more simple and more conformable to truth. M. Orfatto also understands this passage as I do.

... il possente Appollo cura
Haurà de la mia vita.

didst thou not answer the ensnaring questions of the Sphynx, and deliver Thebes from the cruelties exercised on her by that monster? Thy bleeding country then needed the assistance of a man divine, of knowledge more than human; where then were thy prophetic arts, thy mysteries, thy birds, and thy Gods? Oedipus came; and by his wisdom alone, without the aid of birds; Oedipus, who boasted not the gift of prophecy, explained the enigma, and confounded the Sphynx. Ah wretch, confess, that devoured by ambition, thou wouldst seat Creon on the throne, that thou mayst reign under him. This is the secret interest which animates thee to my ruin; but mark me, prophet, thy ambition shall cost thee dear. I will revenge my wrongs on thee, and the base author of this conspiracy; and did not some remains of reverence for thy hoary age restrain me, I would this moment make thee sensible at what a price thou hast abused thy pernicious art.

C H O R U S.

We have been witnesses of your dispute, and own with grief that too much passion has been shewn on either side. Remember prince, Tiresias remember, that to explain the Oracle is all the business now.

T I R E S I A S.

Oedipus, you are a king, but here the liberty of hearing and answering by turns, renders us equal; nor am I your subject, but Apollo's. Know then, that I have no need of being justified by Creon; free and incapable of fear, I will have no other defender but myself. I am blind, it is true; but although you have eyes, you are blind to the miseries which surround you. Know you what air you breathe, with whom, and how you are united? know you who hath given you birth? know you the crimes you have committed, which have made you execrable to your kindred, whether on earth, or in the gloomy regions of the dead? Already the revenging Furies pursue you; a father and a mother drive them on; soon, very soon, deprived of sight like me, you shall be chased from this land. Then, Oedipus, what seas, what mountains * will not echo with your groans, when you shall know your fatal hymen, the impious nuptial torch which you have

* In the Greek, *what Cytherion*? It is ignorant that he was exposed on mount an allusion to the past, which could not be Cytherion. preserved in the translation. Oedipus is

lighted, when you shall see the dreadful rock you have struck upon, and which to you appeared a secure port; when a deluge of miseries, which now you are ignorant of, shall equal you with your children, and overwhelm both you and them? Then, prince, exhaust your rage on Creon and Tiresias: you, you, yourself will best revenge us; and sure a more guilty or more wretched mortal will never lose the light of day.

O E D I P U S.

Oh Gods! must I still hear and suffer these outrages.—Fly, wretch, from my just fury, and shew thy hated face no more.

T I R E S I A S.

I came at your command.

O E D I P U S.

Could I have foreseen this madness, thou should not have been sent for.

T I R E S I A S.

You call me mad: your father did not think me so.

O E D I P U S.

Ha! stay, who was my father?

T I R E S I A S.

This day, yes Oedipus, this fatal day, shall give thee birth and death †.

O E D I P U S.

Thy words are dark, perplexed.

T I R E S I A S.

Is it not your boast to have solved enigmas like these?

O E D I P U S.

That which you reproach me with, is my glory.

T I R E S I A S.

Say, rather your misfortune.

O E D I P U S.

I have preserved Thebes, no matter at what price.

T I R E S I A S.

Lead me hence.

[To his servant.

† That is, he shall know who he is.

O E D I P U S.

OEDIPUS.

Farewell, and rid us of thy presence. Leave us, I say.

TIRESIAS.

Yes, I will leave you. In spite of all your menaces I have declared my secret, and I am satisfied. My life depends not upon you; hear me then for the last time. This man whom you seek, and whom you load with imprecations, this criminal, this murderer, is in Thebes; a foreigner he seems, but soon he shall be acknowledged a Theban; soon, very soon, his fortune, now so gay, so smiling, shall vanish like a dream; indigent, blind, and leaning on a staff, he shall wander through other countries, a spectacle of woe. What will be his grief, his horror, when he discovers himself to be the brother of his children, and the husband of his mother! loaded with the guilt of parricide and incest? Go, prince, explain these dreadful words; and if you find them false, I will acknowledge the justice of your reproaches.

SECOND INTERLUDE.

CHORUS.

What has Apollo, from the deep recesses of his sacred grove, declared! who is this wretch that, unknown to himself, hath stained his hands with blood? Now let him shun the punishment that awaits him; now let him fly swift as the darting lightnings! already the

STROPHE I.

* Demetrius Triclinius, in his treatise upon the verses of Sophocles says, that the Chorus, in singing the strophe, direct their steps towards the right; that they turn to the left when they sing the antistrophe; and lastly, when they sing the epode, which comes after the strophe and antistrophe, they remain fixed in one place. It is alleged, that by these evolutions, which were copied from the Egyptians, the Greeks intended, like them, to describe the course of the stars; thus the strophe, and the movement to the right hand, signified the motion of the fixed stars; the antistrophe and the turning to the left, marked the course of the planets; lastly, the epode and its situation expressed the immoveable state of

the earth. Pindar has imitated these movements, in his odes, apparently, because in singing them, the same evolutions were performed. Theseus, when he returned from Crete, invented a dance which consisted of several turns and windings, in memory of the labyrinth. However, it is not easy to conceive the meaning of these different movements of the Chorus to the right and left. It is my opinion, says M. Dacier, that the Chorus was divided into two bands, as among the Hebrews; that on the right, when they began to sing, advanced to the left as far as the middle of the theatre, and this was the strophe: the other, on the left hand, which was the antistrophe, directed their movement to the right.

immortal

immortal son of Jove aims at him his dreadful bolts; the cruel, the inevitable Fates pursue him.

ANTISTRO-
PHE I.

From the clouds of Parnassus, the Oracle, like a flame breaks forth, and warns the Thebans to produce the criminal. Like a bull, who wanders from the herd to conceal his shame and his defeat, he hides himself in the depth of caverns; he seeks the impenetrable shade of the forests; vainly he wanders through solitary places; in vain he would avoid the sentence which, from the midst of the earth *, has been pronounced against him. The voice, the immortal voice still thunders in his ears.

STROPHE II.

Oh sage Tiresias, what horrors hast thou uttered! shall we give credit to thy fatal words? Is the prophet or is Oedipus to blame? You raise alike our hopes and fears. What rage could animate the son of Polybus † against Laius? Shall we subscribe to an odious reproach, which accuses Oedipus of a murder, he who knows not even the criminal?

ANTISTRO-
PHE II.

Oh Jupiter! oh Apollo! you read the hearts of all, such is the privilege of the Gods. But have priests more knowledge than other men? One mortal is superior to another in wisdom, but all are liable to error. What rashness then to believe, without stronger proofs, the accusation we have heard of Oedipus? Ah, no, it cannot be, that he who saved the Thebans, whose wisdom was acknowledged, even by the Sphinx, should be a murderer.

ACT the THIRD.

SCENE the FIRST.

CREON, the CHORUS.

CREON.

OH Thebans, what have I heard? The king accuses me of the blackest treachery. Oppressed with grief, for this imputed guilt, I come to learn the particulars from you. It is not enough that I bear my part in the general calamity, but I must

* Delphos, which lay at the foot of the mountain Parnassus, was supposed to lie in the center of the world. See the notes upon the Iphigenia in Tauris.

† Oedipus was supposed to be the son of Polybus; it is this which renders the accusations of Tiresias incredible, and which suspends and prepares the unravelling of the plot.

have

have the additional misfortune of being thought criminal by Oedipus; he suspects my words, my actions. Thus dishonoured, life is not worth my care; for will not you, will not my friends henceforth, regard me as a traitor to my country?

CHORUS.

Alas, prince, not truth, but rage, has surely formed these strange suspicions.

CREON.

Who hath suggested to the king, that I have suborned the prophet to spread these false reports?

CHORUS.

The king, indeed, did say so, but on what grounds we know not.

CREON.

What, did he calmly, did he deliberately accuse me of such atrocious guilt?

CHORUS.

It is not for us to penetrate into the thoughts of kings - - - See, he comes, he himself will inform you.

SCENE the SECOND.

To them OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

How! hast thou the presumption to appear before me, convicted * as thou art, of having conspired against my crown and life, comest thou to insult me here, here in my palace? Say, didst thou think me so weak as not to have discovered thy traitorous plots; or so mad, as when I had discovered them, to let thee escape with impunity? What was thy design; how couldst thou hope, destitute of friends, of troops, and treasure, to make thy way to the throne?

* These words in the text, *σοῦς ἐν τῷ δὲ τ' ἀνδρὶς ἱσχυαίης*, are thus translated by M. Dacier, *Thou who art certainly the murderer of Laius*. This mistake has produced another in a modern poet, as if Oedipus reproached Creon with having himself murdered Laius; a reproach which being with-

out the least foundation, would in him have been extremely weak. But it is plain that this could not be the sense of Sophocles: his words are, *Thou art the murderer of this man*, that is, *of me*. This manner of speaking is usual with the Greek and Latin poets.

C R E O N.

Oedipus, I have listened patiently to your charge; suffer me to speak in my turn, and condemn me not unheard.

O E D I P U S.

Yes, thou art eloquent. I know it. Thy artifices also are known to me. I will not hear thee; thy crime is proved.

C R E O N.

I conjure you hear me —

O E D I P U S.

Be silent, or confess that thou art the worst of men.

C R E O N.

How great is your error, prince, if you take prejudice for reason.

O E D I P U S.

Think not to escape unpunished, for having conspired against thy king.

C R E O N.

If I am proved guilty, I will submit to punishment; but, I conjure you, tell me what is my crime?

O E D I P U S.

* Was it not by thy advice, that I sent for this boasted prophet?

C R E O N.

acknowledge it; and I would give the same advice again.

O E D I P U S.

How long is it since Laius — — — —

C R E O N.

Explain yourself.

O E D I P U S.

How long is it since Laius was murdered?

C R E O N.

'Tis many years; but the remembrance of it is not easily effaced.

O E D I P U S.

Did Tiresias, at that time, make profession of this divining art?

* It was from this circumstance, that the suspicions of Oedipus against Creon took their rise.

C R E O N.

O E D I P U S.

27

C R E O N.

His science, and his fame, were then as great as they are now.

O E D I P U S.

Did he name Oedipus to you then?

C R E O N.

Never, in my presence.

O E D I P U S.

Were no enquiries made concerning this murder?

C R E O N.

There were; but all in vain.

O E D I P U S.

Why did not Tiresias speak then as he does now?

C R E O N.

I know not that; I cannot answer to what I am ignorant of.

O E D I P U S.

At least thou knowest what thou thyself art concerned in; it would be wisdom to confess it.

C R E O N.

What should I confess? All that I know I will declare.

O E D I P U S.

Would he have charged the murder of Laius upon me, if thou hadst not joined with him in this accusation?

C R E O N.

You know best, oh Oedipus! what Tiresias has said to you. But it is from you, that I would learn that which you seek to know of me.

O E D I P U S.

Question me then, I permit thee; but never hope to persuade me, that I am the murderer of Laius.

C R E O N.

Are you not the husband of my sister?

O E D I P U S.

I am.

E 2

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Does she not share with you the sovereign power?

O E D I P U S.

She does; and my respect and tenderness for her are boundless.

C R E O N.

Next to you both, am I not the greatest in the kingdom?

O E D I P U S.

Perfidious wretch, this aggravates thy treachery.

C R E O N.

Deign to hear me, prince, and you will be convinced I am not perfidious. The rank I enjoy is equal to royalty; and with it I enjoy what monarchs taste not, security and quiet. What madness to forfeit these advantages for the fears, the anxieties, that surround a throne! Say, can there be room for choice in such unequal blessings*? Born without ambition, I prefer the title of subject to that of king. In this the wise think as I do. Contented in a private station, and free from inquietude, you make my happiness and my honour. To me the throne would prove an inexhausted source of cares; and I should be more a slave than king. How, with these sad appendages, could I prefer a crown to that power, which by your indulgence I possess, unenvied, yet without bounds. No, Oedipus, no, I feel and I acknowledge my present happy lot. Is not my every wish prevented? Am I not the distributor of your benefits, beloved and respected by your subjects as their patron and support with you? I should be the weakest of men were I to forfeit these advantages. You know my heart too well; my sentiments are not those of a rebel and a traitor; never has this horrible scheme entered my thoughts; so far from heading a conspiracy against my king and brother, I should blush to be an accomplice in it. If my oaths will not gain credit with you, believe the Oracle of Delphos, consult the God. If this impious plot can be proved against Tiresias and me, I will submit to whatever punishment you doom me. You shall not be

* This moral, and consequently this defence of Creon's, will not be admitted in our time; but in Greece a crown was not what it is with us. Hippolitus argues in the same manner in the Phædra of Eu-

ripides; see the fifth scene in the fourth act. These two passages of different authors, shew that this moral was then inculcated by the sages.

my only judge, I will be the first to condemn myself. Do not then, I conjure you, blacken me with such atrocious crimes upon a bare suspicion. It is alike unjust to attribute virtue to the wicked, and wickedness to the virtuous. He who sacrifices a friend to his unjust suspicions, strikes at his own life. But what do I say? a friend is more precious than life itself. But I have done; time will discover all; a single day is sufficient to detect guilt; time alone can justify innocence.

C H O R U S.

He argues justly; oh beware, great king, of judging rashly; a sudden resolution cannot be a wise one.

O E D I P U S.

A speedy vengeance is due to treachery. What, lulled into a false security by his specious eloquence, shall I wait calmly till his plots are ripe, and fall a victim to them?

C R E O N.

What is your sentence, Oedipus? am I condemned to banishment?

O E D I P U S.

To death. It is not just that a traitor should escape with a less punishment.

C R E O N.

Prove me guilty *, and I will fly to meet that death you doom me to.

O E D I P U S.

Now! this is the answer of a rebel.

C R E O N.

Your sentence is unjust.

O E D I P U S.

It is for the security of my crown, that I condemn thee.

C R E O N.

And equity demands that I preserve a life, which you would wrongfully deprive me of.

* Creon begins now to speak with some haughtiness; but it was to him, that after the death of Laius, the kingdom lawfully belonged; he was of the royal family; the adventure of the Sphinx raised Oedipus to

the throne, in prejudice to the right of the other: it is this which renders Creon excusable, and increases the suspicions of Oedipus.

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

Thou art a traitor*.

C R E O N.

I am not convicted.

O E D I P U S.

Is it not a subject's duty, to submit to the orders of his king?

C R E O N.

Not when those orders are unjust.

O E D I P U S.

Oh Thebes! oh citizens! - - - -

C R E O N.

I am, as well as you, the master of this people; nay more, their fellow-citizen. I have an equal right to implore their assistance.

C H O R U S.

Oh princes! what is your design? Behold the queen Jocasta! Let her decide this quarrel.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

To them J O C A S T A.

J O C A S T A.

Alas, Oedipus! alas, my brother! what means this mutual rage? What, in the midst of your expiring country's groans, do you not blush to add weight to her calamities by your dissensions! Let me intreat you, Oedipus, return to your apartment; and, Creon, do you retire. Ah, cease to imbitter our woes; nor let this ill-timed quarrel produce more fatal consequences.

C R E O N.

Jocasta, be you witness how your brother is treated by the king; he threatens me with death or banishment.

O E D I P U S.

'Tis true, Jocasta; but his guilt deserves this punishment; he has conspired against his king.

* I know not why M. Dacier has omitted this line, and Creon's answer.

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Seize me ye Furies! load me with your severest tortures, if I am guilty of the crime of which he accuses me.

J O C A S T A.

What would you more, oh Oedipus? I conjure you, in the name of the Gods, pay some regard to an oath so awful; yield to the intreaties of your people, yield to mine.

C H O R U S.

Oh deign, great prince, to listen to our prayers; moderate your anger; let the queen prevail with you, and yield to our united supplications.

O E D I P U S.

Ah, what is it you ask of me? shall I bend to a subject?

C H O R U S.

Remember how faithful his past conduct has been, how vehement his present protestations.

O E D I P U S.

Have you considered what it is you request of me?

C H O R U S.

We have.

O E D I P U S.

Dare you avow it then? If you dare, speak.

C H O R U S.

We are not afraid to own, that we wish you to preserve a friend; at least, that you would not punish him upon uncertain suspicions.

O E D I P U S.

To solicit for his pardon, is to solicit for the death or banishment of your king.

C H O R U S.

Oh * first of Gods! all-seeing Sun! thee we attest as witness to our oaths. If this execrable thought e'er tainted our minds, may we perish abandoned by Heaven and men. Alas, oh prince! we lament the miseries of our unhappy country; and by your fatal dissensions these miseries are increased.

* First of the Gods, because he is more immediately present.

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

Well, let him retire. I pardon him with the danger of my own life and crown. But, let him know, that it is to your supplications alone he owes his pardon. Wherever he is, he will be always odious to me.

C R E O N.

* So cruel in your mercy! what then would be your vengeance? but such is your character; you are punished by your own passions.

O E D I P U S.

Cease to insult me further; hence! avoid my rage.

C R E O N.

Yes, I will go. You know me not, that is my unhappiness. The Thebans will be more just.

C H O R U S.

Ah, princess! why stay you here? prevail upon the king to retire also.

S C E N E the F O U R T H.

J O C A S T A, O E D I P U S, the C H O R U S.

J O C A S T A.

I would first know the occasion of their quarrel.

C H O R U S.

It took its rise from some suspicions avowed by the king. Unjust reproaches are felt too sensibly.

J O C A S T A.

Were these reproaches mutual?

C H O R U S.

The offence was so.

J O C A S T A.

What was the cause? I intreat you tell me?

* This passage is obscure. Camerarius following the scholiast, gives it this sense as well as M. Orfatto, *You pardon unwillingly; but when your resentment is appeased, you*

will blush at it. The other is more natural, and it is followed by M. Dacier and M. Boivin.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Princess, we beseech you, enquire no more. Surrounded as we are with miseries, it is not safe to awaken the remembrance of past dissensions.

O E D I P U S. *[To the Chorus.]*

How blind are you! Notwithstanding your boasted equity, you have abandoned my interest, and put the last hand to my misfortunes.

C H O R U S.

Alas, great king, what ingratitude, what folly would we not be guilty of, should we divide our interests from yours! Was not our sinking country raised by you; are not you our deliverer from past misfortunes; and in the present, are not all our hopes centered in you?

J O C A S T A.

Conceal not from me, Oedipus, I conjure you, in the name of the Gods, conceal not from me the cause of your indignation.

O E D I P U S.

You shall be obliged, Jocasta, my love can refuse you nothing; hear then the conspiracy formed by Creon - - - -

J O C A S T A.

He is my brother; yet I will listen to your complaints against him, provided you have certain evidence of his guilt.

O E D I P U S.

He charges me with the murder of Laius.

J O C A S T A.

Does he pretend to found this accusation on his own knowledge, or on the reports of others?

O E D I P U S.

He has suborned the artful Tiresias to spread these injurious reports among the people; and it will not be his fault if they do not rise in rebellion against me.

J O C A S T A.

Oedipus, listen to me now in your turn. Oh banish from your mind these restless fears, this vain anxiety. Regard not the idle predictions of diviners; there is no foreknowledge upon earth. I have reason to say so, and you may judge of the uncertainty of their

art, by what I am going to relate. Laius received an Oracle formerly, (I will not say from Apollo) but from his priests; it declared, that he should perish by the hand of his son; such was the decree of the Destinies. And yet, if I may give credit to general report, my husband was assassinated by robbers, in a road that parted into three different ways. I was delivered of this so much dreaded son, with whom the Oracle had threatened Laius; but scarce were three days elapsed, when, by the king's command, the feet of the unhappy infant were bored, and he was exposed upon a distant mountain. You see how Apollo confirmed his prediction; yet there have always been Oracles. Comfort yourself then, and be assured, that what a God determines, he declares without any obscurity.

O E D I P U S.

Ah, Jocasta! what have you said? What new disquiets have you raised in my soul?

J O C A S T A.

From whence proceeds these new disquiets, prince?

O E D I P U S.

Did you not say, that Laius was murdered in a place where three ways meet?

J O C A S T A.

Such then was the common report, and such it is to this day.

O E D I P U S.

Where happened this dreadful accident?

J O C A S T A.

In Phocis, in a place where the roads meet that lead to Delphi and to Daulia*.

O E D I P U S.

And at what time?

J O C A S T A.

We heard of it but just before you came to Thebes.

O E D I P U S.

Oh, Jupiter! what hast thou decreed for me?

* Delphi and Daulia are separated by between the Opuntian gulf, and the gulf of the mountain Parnassus in Phocis, between Crissa.

J O C A S T A.

JOCASTA.

Alas, my Oedipus! what means this exclamation?

OEDIPUS.

Question me not; but, tell me, what age was Laius of? what was his person?

JOCASTA.

Tall and majestic; his hair just silvered over; allowing for the difference of your years, you greatly resemble him.

OEDIPUS.

Oh Gods! and have I then ignorantly bound myself by the most horrid imprecations?

JOCASTA.

What say you, Oedipus? Alas! I dare not look upon you.

OEDIPUS.

I tremble, lest the blind prophet has seen but too clearly. One word more, and I am satisfied.

JOCASTA.

Horror seizes me! But speak; I will tell you all I know.

OEDIPUS.

How was Laius attended?

JOCASTA.

Five persons only composed his train; so popular he was; and of this number the herald was one. Laius rode in a chariot.

OEDIPUS.

I am lost! undone! my misfortune is too evident. But say, Jocasta, from whom had you this account?

JOCASTA.

From an officer belonging to the king, who alone escaped the danger.

OEDIPUS.

Is he in the palace?

JOCASTA.

No. For he was scarce returned to Thebes, when seeing you on the throne, and unwilling to stay in a place where every object revived the remembrance of his lamented master, he implored me

to send him into the country, to have charge of my flocks. So faithful a servant merited this recompence, and a better fortune.

OEDIPUS.

Send for him, Jocasta; send for him instantly.

JOCASTA.

It shall be done. But may I ask you why?

OEDIPUS.

I fear they have spoken too truly*. I would know more. In one word, Jocasta, I must see him.

JOCASTA.

Well, you shall see him. But will you not repose some confidence in me, and let me know the cause of this strange inquietude?

OEDIPUS.

I can refuse you nothing. To whom should I disclose my sorrows, if not to you, who so generously partakes them with me? The son of Polybus and Merope his queen, I held the first rank in Corinth, my native country. I was the hope and expectation of the Corinthians; when one day an adventure happened, with which I had reason to be surprised; though, perhaps, I suffered myself to be too much affected by it. A man, heated with wine, had the insolence to tell me, I was a foundling, and not the son of Polybus and Merope. Inraged at this affront, I complained of it to the king and queen. Their resentment of it was not less than mine. My tenderness and respect for them struggled against my fears and my suspicions. But this reproach was deeply impressed on my heart. I left the court, and went to the temple of Delphi, to consult the God. Apollo, instead of answering me, predicted to me the most horrible misfortunes. The Destinies, said the Oracle, have decreed, that Oedipus shall be the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, and beget an execrable race. Terrified at this dreadful Oracle, and to avoid the possibility of accomplishing it, I resolved never more to return to Corinth. I regulated my journey by the stars†, and arrived at the place

* The text here is equivocal; by some it is thus translated, *I fear I have said too much.*

† The ancients were greatly prejudiced in favour of astronomy; they were directed by the stars in their journies, both by land and sea.

where you say Laius was murdered. Ah, Jocasta, scarce had I reached that fatal place where the three roads join, when I was met by a herald, and a person, such as you describe Laius, seated on a chariot. They would have forced me to give them way. Transported with rage, I struck him by whom I was insulted: his master, watching his opportunity, gave me two blows, and felt a severer effect of my resentment; with one stroke he was deprived of sense and motion, and, tumbling from his chariot, expired at my feet. His attendants died also by my hand. If I have killed Laius, then, oh Gods! is there a wretch so cursed as I am? Abandoned by heaven and man, no Theban, no stranger can henceforth hold converse with me; condemned to wander a wretched fugitive, driven from this hospitable land; and, alas! by whom, by myself! It is I who have pronounced the fatal sentence! Oh height of misery; oh wretch abhorred! Have I not polluted the bed of him whom I so cruelly massacred? and whither shall I fly? Banished from Thebes, whither shall I now direct my steps? Shall I return to Corinth, to my native land, and incur the guilt of parricide and incest? Shall my impious hands be blotted with the blood of him that gave me birth? Shall I murder Polybus, and marry Merope? Oh cruel fortune! oh merciless decree! To me then must these foredoomed horrors be imputed? Strike me, ye equitable Deities, with your bolts; suffer me not to see that execrable day; erase me from the number of the living, before my life is marked with these detested crimes.

C H O R U S.

Our hearts bleed for your griefs, oh Oedipus. But, we conjure you, banish not all hope, till you have seen this Shepherd.

O E D I P U S.

I will expect his coming. In him centers all the hope I have remaining.

J O C A S T A.

And when he does come, what do you resolve on?

O E D I P U S.

If his account of Laius's death agrees with your's, my fears will be removed.

J O C A S T A.

What do you conclude then, from what I have said?

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

This Shepherd, you say, assured you, that Laius was assassinated by robbers. If he persists in this declaration I am happy. For it was not possible to mistake one man for many. If he says the murder was committed by one only, I shall hold myself convicted; evidently I am the criminal.

J O C A S T A.

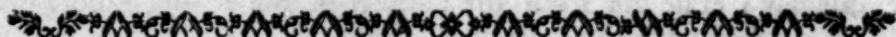
Be comforted then. He has already said the contrary; he cannot deny his first report, to which all Thebes, as well as I, was witness. But if his account of Laius's death should be such as your fears suggest, it would not be conformable to the Oracle. Apollo foretold that Laius should be murdered by his son and mine. Alas, this innocent victim to our fears, instead of giving death received it from us. Judge then, prince, if your Oracle merits more faith than mine.

O E D I P U S.

Jocasta, you calm my fears; but, to remove them entirely, it is necessary I should see this Shepherd; send for him then, I beg you. Upon him depends my destiny.

J O C A S T A.

You shall be obeyed. For what would I not do to satisfy you?



T H I R D I N T E R L U D E.

C H O R U S.

STROPHE I.

* Grant us, ye just Gods, the supreme happiness of being holy in all our words and actions. Oh may those laws, those divine laws, which from the Heaven of Heavens descended to us, still guide and regulate our lives! Yes, from Olympus they came; they are the sacred dictates of the Gods, and not of our weak reason. Their immortal beauties never decay; oblivion cannot efface them. Unchanging Truth resides in them, and marks them for her own.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Tyranny is the offspring of pride. Pride, when it has accumulated evils upon evils, reaches at length its summit, and, giddy

* The Chorus, according to their character, make some reparation here for the impiety of Jocasta, without naming her.

with

with the heighth, precipitates itself into an abyſs of miſeries. Oh great Apollo! ſuffer not this vice to retard the explanation of thy Oracles, from which Thebes hopes for a deliverance from her woes. Remember, oh remember, powerful Deity! that although others neglect thy altars, we never will fail in that reverence and ſubmiſſion which we owe thee.

Periſh the wretch whoſe ſacrilegious hand, or impious tongue, STROPHE II. ſhall violate juſtice, the laws, and ſacred temples of the Gods. Periſh him whoſe avarice and love of guilty pleaſures, plunges in unrepented crimes. Oh! if impiety is rewarded, who will henceforth repreſs the fallies of his impetuous paſſions, and watch over the motions of his heart? who will, for the future, lead up ſolemn dances in honour of the Gods?

Ah! to what purpoſe ſhall we, devout adorers, offer the vows ANTISTRO- and incenſe of mortals at the altars of Delphi * in Phocis, and PHE II. at thoſe of Olympius †, if Apollo does not, to the whole uni- verſe, aſſert the truth of his divine Oracles? Oh! hear us, ſo- vereign maſter of the world, whoſe kingdom is eternal. Hear us, great Jupiter, and ſhew thy ſuppliants, that from thy penetrating eye nothing is concealed. Alas! the Oracles pronounced to Laius are deſpiſed, Apollo is neglected, and religion is ho- noured no more.

ACT the FOURTH.

SCENE the FIRST.

JOCASTA, the CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

YE noble Thebans, I am going to the temples of the Gods. From theſe wreaths of flowers, and this incenſe, which I bear, you may know the ſubject of my petitions. Alas, Oedipus! tortured with melancholy thoughts, inſtead of judging the preſent

* In Phocis. In the Greek, *ἡ δὲ τῆς τοῦ Ἀβασίου πόλις*. This city, ſays Pausanias, is in Phocis. It was built by a colony of Argives, and took its name from Lyncias and Hypermnestra: Apollo had a temple there.

Others ſay that Delphi was a city of Lydia.

† Olympius, or Piſa, a city of Elis in Peloponneſus, in which the olympick games were celebrated, at a ſmall diſtance from the temple of Jupiter Olympus.

Oracle by the passed, as it is reasonable he should do, listens only to his fears, and resigns himself to whatever may confirm them. My counsels and my tender cares are fruitless ; therefore 'tis you whom I implore, oh great Apollo! * your temple is the nearest, and thither I fly to implore your compassion. For Oedipus, like a pilot dismayed at the storm that rises round him, infuses his terrors even in our breasts.

SCENE the SECOND.

The QUEEN, the CHORUS, a SHEPHERD
from Corinth.

SHEPHERD.

I pray you tell me, Thebans, where is the palace of Oedipus. Where may I see the king himself?

CHORUS.

Stranger, you see his palace before you. There you will find the king. Yonder is the queen, his wife.

SHEPHERD.

May Heaven crown, with its richest blessings, the spouse and family of so mighty a prince.

JOCASTA.

And may you, kind stranger, enjoy all the happiness you wish to me. Your words are a fortunate presage, and merit this return. But say, what brings you hither? what news have you to acquaint us with?

SHEPHERD.

I bring happy news for you, and for the king.

JOCASTA.

What is this news? From whence come you?

SHEPHERD.

From Corinth. And the news I bring will give you both grief and joy.

* In the Greek it is, *Ob Lycian Apollo*, or of *Lycia*, *πρὸς τὸν Δία Λύκαι Ἀπόλλων* (*ἀρχαῖος γὰρ ὁ*) The meaning is not that Jocasta intended to go to Lycia, or to Lycia at

Athens; she was going to the temple of Apollo, which was nearest to Thebes, and called Lycian from his surname, there to begin her devotions in favour of Oedipus.

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

How! Explain this riddle.

SHEPHERD.

It is reported in Corinth, that the king thy husband will be elected king of the Isthmus, by the unanimous suffrages of the Corinthians.

JOCASTA.

Is the old king, Polybus, no longer on the throne then?

SHEPHERD.

He is in the tomb.

JOCASTA.

Is Polybus dead! is it possible?

SHEPHERD.

May I die myself, this moment, if my report be false.

JOCASTA.

[To her woman.]

Go, fly! bear to the king this news. Now, ye vain Oracles, where are your predictions? Oedipus banishes himself from Corinth, lest he should murder Polybus: and Polybus dies by the hands of the Destinies.

SCENE the THIRD.

To them OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

My dear Jocasta, how generously dost thou share in all my sorrows! What wouldest thou now? why hast thou sent for me?

JOCASTA.

Hear, prince, hear what this stranger has to say; and judge what faith we owe to Oracles.

OEDIPUS.

This stranger! who is he? from whence does he come?

JOCASTA.

He comes from Corinth, to bring thee the news of thy father's death.

O E D I P U S.

What say'st thou, is my father dead? Oh, stranger, I conjure thee, speak.

S H E P H E R D.

Since it is thy command, great prince, that I should begin, by acquainting thee with this melancholy circumstance, know then, that it is true, Polybus is no longer among the living.

O E D I P U S.

Say, how died he, by sickness or by treason? Speak.

S H E P H E R D.

Alas! need it be asked? The slightest accident is sufficient to throw old age into the tomb.

O E D I P U S.

'Twas weakness then.

S H E P H E R D.

And his great age.

O E D I P U S.

* Ah, Jocasta, seek not the altars now: consult not the flight of birds. They have predicted to me, that I should murder my father; and this father descends to the regions of the dead, while I live peaceably at Thebes. These hands were never raised against his life. His death cannot, surely, be attributed to me, unless, perhaps 'tis said, that grief for my loss shortened his days; and thus, indeed, I may be called the author of his death. But now Polybus is in the shades, and with him he has carried all those vain Oracles.

J O C A S T A.

Did I not foretell thee, that these fears were groundless?

O E D I P U S.

Thou did'st. But all thy arguments could not banish them.

* M. Dacier translates this passage thus, *Alas, madam, henceforth who would consult the Oracle of Apollo? who, &c.* This does not appear to me to be the true sense. Jocasta was going to consult the Gods in favour of Oedipus; Oedipus, whose fears were re-

moved by the accounts which the Shepherd had brought from Corinth, tells the queen that there was now no necessity for having recourse to altars and birds; and besides, he had been deceived by his credulity.

J O C A S T A.

J O C A S T A.

No longer then, suffer such imaginary evils to tyrannize over thy mind.

O E D I P U S.

But the predicted incest. Ah Jocasta! have I not reason to tremble still with the apprehension of guilt like that?

J O C A S T A.

Guided as thou art, by an auspicious fortune, what hast thou to fear? Believe me, Oedipus, prudence, when carried to excess, is often fatal. To chance leave all events, and while thou liv'st, enjoy thy life. On what do'st thou found these torturing fears, but a vain dream; think of it no longer. If thou would'st be happy, thou must despise these idle superstitions.

O E D I P U S.

I should approve thy reasoning, if my mother also was laid in the tomb. While she lives, I shall have cause to fear, and I shall still fear.

J O C A S T A.

Has not then the death of thy father dissipated this illusion? Strange prejudice!

O E D I P U S.

My father's death, I confess, ought to comfort me. But still my mother lives.

S H E P H E R D.

May I presume to ask, who is the person whom thou fearest?

O E D I P U S.

'Tis Merope, the widow of the late king.

S H E P H E R D.

Merope? What do'st thou fear from her?

O E D I P U S.

The effect of a horrid Oracle.

S H E P H E R D.

Is it so dreadful, that thou dar'st not repeat it?

O E D I P U S.

If I may believe Apollo, I shall commit parricide and incest; be the murderer of my father, and the husband of my mother.

ther. Terrified, lest I should accomplish this horrible prediction, I fled from Corinth, a voluntary, and, as thou seest, a fortunate exile; but still unhappy, because these eyes must never more behold what is most dear to me.

S H E P H E R D.

And is this thy only reason for not returning to Corinth?

O E D I P U S.

I have, I confess it, been afraid of incurring the guilt of parricide and incest.

S H E P H E R D.

* Ah, prince, it is necessary that I should free thee from this fear, since I came to Thebes only to make thee happy.

O E D I P U S.

A service of such importance, will merit my acknowledgement.

S H E P H E R D.

† The glory of restoring thee to Corinth, will be my best reward. It was for this purpose only that I came to Thebes.

O E D I P U S.

Ah, no. I never will return to Corinth while my mother lives.

S H E P H E R D.

Alas, prince, thou art ignorant who thou art.

O E D I P U S.

How! Stranger, I conjure thee, in the name of the Gods, inform me then?

S H E P H E R D.

If the motive which prevents thee from returning to thy own palace - - - - -

* This is the beginning of that *untravel* which Aristotle, in the eleventh chapter of his Poetics, cites as one of the most surprising and beautiful; indeed, nothing can be better imagined.

† This is the Greek passage, *καὶ μὴ μάλιστα τὸτ' ἀφικέμενος ἔπαις οὐ πρὸς δόμους ἰδὼν ἑνὸς αὐτοῦ πατρὸς*, which is thus translated by M. Dacier, *I hastened to bring you this news, my lord, that when you return to Corinth, I may*

enjoy your favour, and live happy under your protection. A very interested compliment it must be confessed; but, I dare say, this is not the meaning of Sophocles. The reader will judge for himself, as M. Dacier's note, tho' otherwise very ingenious, does not seem to have excused this incongruity. M. Orfatto and M. Boivin have also understood it in the same sense.

O E D I P U S.

OEDIPUS.

Yes, I repeat it. It is the fear of accomplishing the Oracle.

SHEPHERD.

If thou art apprehensive of thy relations - - - .

OEDIPUS.

They, they are the source of those terrors which afflict me.

SHEPHERD.

Well, nothing can be more unreasonable than these terrors.

OEDIPUS.

Unreasonable! Am I not the son of Polybus?

SHEPHERD.

Polybus is not related to thee.

OEDIPUS.

How! is it not to Polybus that I owe my birth?

SHEPHERD.

* No more, nor no less, than to me.

OEDIPUS.

He called me his son.

SHEPHERD.

But it was I who gave thee to him.

OEDIPUS.

Would he have shewn so much tenderness to a child that was not his own?

SHEPHERD.

He had no children of his own.

OEDIPUS.

Who am I then? Did'st thou purchase me, or art thou my father?

* M. Dacier would not translate this, and the two following verses literally, doubtless, because he did not attend to the pretty equivocation in the Shepherd's answer, *No more, nor no less, than to me*, he makes him barely say, *No, my lord*. However, the art of this passage in the Greek

consists in the Corinthian Shepherd's speaking the exact truth, when he says that Polybus was no more nor no less the father of Oedipus than he was. The Shepherd had saved his life, Polybus had adopted him; but neither the one nor the other had given him birth.

O E D I P U S.

S H E P H E R D.

I found thee upon mount Citheron*.

O E D I P U S.

What led thee to those deserts?

S H E P H E R D.

I had the charge of some flocks.

O E D I P U S.

Thou wer't a Shepherd then?

S H E P H E R D.

Yes, prince, and I was thy deliverer.

O E D I P U S.

In what condition did'st thou find me?

S H E P H E R D.

Thy feet were bored; the marks must still remain.

O E D I P U S.

Alas, what tortures have I suffered!

S H E P H E R D.

I untied the cords with which thy feet were bound.

O E D I P U S.

Strange barbarity towards an infant!

S H E P H E R D.

It was from this adventure, that the name † thou bearest was given thee.

O E D I P U S.

Tell me, I conjure thee by the Gods, was it my father or my mother that loaded me with this curse? By which of them was I doomed to perish?

S H E P H E R D.

I am ignorant of that. He, from whose hands I received thee, may know, perhaps.

O E D I P U S.

Then I was given thee by another?

* Citheron is a mountain which separates Beotia from Attica.

† Oedipus, οἰδῶς, that is, swelled feet.

S H E P-

SHEPHERD.

I received thee from another Shepherd.

OEDIPUS.

Who was that Shepherd?

SHEPHERD.

He belonged, it was said, to Laius.

OEDIPUS.

To Laius! To the king of this country?

SHEPHERD.

To him. He had charge of his flocks.

OEDIPUS.

Lives he still, this Shepherd? Can I see him?

SHEPHERD.

I see none here who can inform thee.

OEDIPUS.

[To the Chorus.]

If any one among you knows this Shepherd, the town or village where he dwells, let him declare it. In my present situation it is necessary that I should see him.

CHORUS.

* He certainly means the man whom thou hast already sent for. But the queen can best inform thee.

OEDIPUS.

Dost thou know, Jocasta, whether the man we have sent for, is the same of whom this stranger speaks?

JOCASTA.

Of what! Of whom does he speak? Alas, Oedipus, calm your disquiets, and listen no longer to such rash and insolent reports.

* The Chorus have reason for saying this, upon what they had heard Jocasta relate to Oedipus before, concerning Laius's Shepherd. There is likewise infinite art in engaging the queen in this enquiry. She who already knows the whole mystery, is silent with astonishment. The remainder of this scene is conducted with great judg-

ment. Oedipus, unhappily for himself, always too curious, will proceed in his enquiry, notwithstanding the earnest intreaties of the queen, who already knows too much; and he attributes the advice she gives him, to a secret fear of finding herself the wife of a slave, of a Shepherd's son.

OEDIPUS.

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

No, princess, no. May the Gods preserve me from following thy councils. The discoveries I have already made, engage me to pursue this enquiry. I am resolved to know my birth.

J O C A S T A.

Oh, Oedipus, I conjure thee, by the immortal Gods, seek to know no more. If thy repose be dear to thee, drop this fatal enquiry. Alas! I am already too wretched.

O E D I P U S.

I understand thee, princess. But do not afflict thyself. Could it be proved that I am descended from these slaves, this infamy would not reflect on thee.

J O C A S T A.

Oh, Oedipus, if I have any power over thy mind, quit, I conjure thee, this fatal design.

O E D I P U S.

Never, till the truth, I am in search of, is brought to light.

J O C A S T A.

Think I implore thee, think that I have powerful reasons for dissuading thee from it.

O E D I P U S.

And it is these secret reasons which encrease my fears, and my curiosity.

J O C A S T A.

[*Aside.*

Ah, wretched prince - - - mayest thou be ever ignorant of thy fate.

O E D I P U S.

Conduct the Shepherd hither. Let the queen blush, if she will, for my birth, and boast her own.

J O C A S T A.

Oh, most unfortunate of men! - - - Go. I can say no more, this is the last time I shall ever speak to thee.

SCENE

SCENE the FOURTH.

OEDIPUS, the CHORUS, the Corinthian
SHEPHERD.

CHORUS:

Ah, prince, whither flies the queen, dismayed, astonished, oppressed with secret anguish? Alas! what may be the fatal consequences of this dreadful silence?

OEDIPUS.

Fatal though they be I am resolved to know my birth, however vile and base it proves. Ah! I perceive it, the queen blushes at my obscurity: such is the ambitious temper of the sex. It matters not; I am not ashamed of my destiny. The child of fortune, I have received too many favours from her to be ungrateful*. Months, years, and lucky accidents, are my kindred. They who were witnesses of my humble birth, have raised me to the height of grandeur and of power†. Though I should cease my enquiries, my birth would still be what it is.

CHORUS.

‡ If mortals may presume to look into futurity, if our conjectures are not false, Oh! Citheron, before the sun again begins his course, thou shalt unfold the birth of Oedipus. Then will we, to gratulate our loved prince, lead up the sprightly dance, and join in choral hymns. Oh! deign Apollo, to confirm these pleasing hopes, and be propitious to our vows. STROPHE.

What God, great prince, what Goddess, gave thee birth? Perhaps some nymph, surprised by Pan, as she wandered careless through the woods; perhaps some beauteous favourite|| of Apollo; for this Deity loves silvan scenes and solitary mountains. Mercury perhaps, the God of Cyllene§, or Bacchus, who loves the shady ANTISTROPHE.

* Horace borrows this thought in his sixth satire, book the second.

Luserat in campo fortunæ filius.

† In this passage I have followed the sense which M. Dacier gives it, and which is certainly the finest and most natural. M. Orfatto and M. Boivin translates it thus likewise.

‡ This Strophe and Antistrophe shew that

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the Chorus advance in a body and speak.

|| I translate *θυγάτηρ*, favourite, or mistress; which indeed seems to be the meaning.

The other sense is that which M. Orfatto has given it. *O d' Apollo la figlia, à cui son grati gli alti gioghi, e le rupi.*

§ Cyllene, a mountain in Arcadia, where Mercury, the son of Jupiter and Maia, was born.

H

forests,

forests, and often woo's the nymphs of Helicon *: are you, oh ! prince, the offspring of their loves ?

OEDIPUS *perceiving Phorbas at a distance.*

If I may judge by appearances that old man † whom I see yonder is the Shepherd I expect. His person, his air, his age, which seems to agree with that of this stranger, all persuade me I am not mistaken. I think also that I know my officers, who are conducting him hither. [*To the Chorus.*] You who have been acquainted with him can judge with more certainty.

CHORUS.

We know him: he is indeed that faithful Shepherd who belonged to Laius.

OEDIPUS.

Say, stranger, is this the man you spoke of ?

SHEPHERD.

The very same.

SCENE the FIFTH.

To them PHORBAS.

OEDIPUS.

Shepherd, approach. Did'st thou not once belong to Laius ? Answer me.

PHORBAS.

I did, great prince. I was an officer of the king's, born in his palace ; not purchased, as a common slave.

OEDIPUS.

What was thy employment ?

PHORBAS.

I passed the greatest part of my life in attending flocks.

OEDIPUS.

To what places did'st thou use to lead them ?

* Helicon, a mountain in Phocis, from whence runs the river Hippocrene.

† I am of opinion, that we ought here to follow the manuscript mentioned by

Henry Stephens, and read *παισθι*, that old man, rather than *παισθις*, Oh, ye old men : which leaves it doubtful which is the Chorus.

OEDIPUS.

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PHORBAS.

To mount Citheron, and the vallies near it.

OEDIPUS.

Look on this stranger; do'st thou know him? Hast thou not seen him before?

PHORBAS. *Surprised.*

Who - - - what has he done - - - of whom do'st thou speak?

OEDIPUS.

I ask thee whether thou wert not formerly acquainted with this stranger whom thou seest here?

PHORBAS.

With him! No, prince: at least I cannot recal it to my remembrance.

SHEPHERD.

This is not strange: but he will soon remember me. He cannot have forgot that we used to pass three seasons of the year together upon mount Citheron*, from the spring till the end of autumn. On the approach of winter we returned to our several homes. Is not this true?

PHORBAS.

I remember it now: but thou speakest of a time long past.

SHEPHERD.

Yet more; do'st thou remember that I received from thy hands an infant, which thou gavest me to bring up as my own?

PHORBAS.

What would'st thou have me say? Oh! why this question?

SHEPHERD. *Pointing to Oedipus.*

Friend, that child thou gavest to me lived to be a man, behold him - - -

PHORBAS.

Ah! wretch, be silent. May the Gods strike thee with instant death!

* Such is the scholiast's interpretation of this passage, in which he is followed both by Dacier and Orsatto.

O E D I P U S. To Phorbas.

Dare not to treat him thus. The punishment thou wishest
upon him, thou best deservest.

P H O R B A S.

Alas! what is my crime?

O E D I P U S.

Thy crime is that thou wilt not answer to the fact he speaks of.

P H O R B A S.

He knows not what he says.

O E D I P U S.

Thou shalt be forced to speak.

P H O R B A S.

Oh! spare my age.

O E D I P U S.

Load him with chains this moment.

P H O R B A S.

Unhappy that I am ----- Ah! what wilt thou do? What is
it I must answer to?

O E D I P U S.

Didst thou give him an infant? Speak!

P H O R B A S.

Oh! misery ----- Well, I did give him one ----- Gods!
why was not that day, that fatal day, the last of my life -----
Oh death! -----

O E D I P U S.

Speak, or thy prayers for death shall soon be granted.

P H O R B A S.

They will be sooner granted if I speak.

O E D I P U S.

This fellow, I perceive it, seeks only to amuse me with his
evasive answers.

P H O R B A S.

Alas! have I not own'd, I gave an infant to him?

O E D I P U S.

OEDIPUS.

Where didst thou find that infant, was it thine? Or didst thou receive it from another?

PHORBAS.

The child was given me by another: he was not my own.

OEDIPUS.

By whom was he given to thee; who were his parents?

PHORBAS.

Oh! prince, I conjure thee by the immortal Gods, demand no more.

OEDIPUS.

Speak: thou art lost if I am forced to bid thee twice.

PHORBAS.

The child was born in the palace of Laius.

OEDIPUS.

Was he the king's, or one of his slaves.

PHORBAS.

* Cruel necessity: I die if I speak.

OEDIPUS.

* " Oedipus, by his curiosity, fell into
" great mischief: for, being of a parentage
" to himself unknown, and now of Corinth,
" where he was a stranger, he went about
" asking questions concerning himself; and
" lighting on Laius, he slew him; and
" then by the marriage of the queen, who
" was his own mother, he obtained the
" government. Not contented with the
" thoughts of being thus happy, he must
" needs once more (against all the per-
" suasions of his wife) be enquiring con-
" cerning himself; when meeting with an
" old man, that was privy to the whole
" contrivance, he pressed him earnestly to
" reveal the secret: and, beginning now
" to suspect the worst, the old man cried
" out:

" Alas! so sad a tale to tell, I dread.

" But he, burning with impatience of
" knowing all, replies,

" And I to heart; but yet it must be
" said.

" Thus oddly mixt with pain and pleasure
" is the restless itch of curiosity, that, like
" a healing wound, it will hazard the loss
" of blood, rather than want the seeming
" ease of being rubbed and scratched. But
" such as either by good nature or good
" discipline are free from this disease, and
" have experienced the valuable felicity of
" a calm and undisturbed spirit, will ra-
" ther rejoice in being ignorant, than de-
" sire to be informed of the wickedness
" and the miseries that are in the world,
" and can sit down well satisfied in this
" opinion;

" What vice and mischiefs mankind
" overflow,

" 'Tis wisdom to forget, or not to know.

" Wherefore, as a farther help to check
" the impatience of our curiosity, it will
" con-

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

And I, if I listen to thee. But speak.

P H O R B A S.

It was said, he was the son of Laius. The queen knows more.
She can inform thee.

O E D I P U S.

It was from the queen then that thou receivedst the child?

P H O R B A S.

It was.

O E D I P U S.

Why did she deliver him to thee?

P H O R B A S.

She commanded me to murder him.

O E D I P U S.

Inhuman! murder him! murder her child!

P H O R B A S.

The dread of certain oracles stifled her tenderness.

O E D I P U S.

What did those oracles declare?

P H O R B A S.

That this child should one day be the destroyer of those who gave him life.

" contribute much, to practise such acts
" of abstinence as these: If a letter be
" brought thee, lay it aside for some time
" before thou read it, and not (as many
" do) eagerly fall upon the seal, with tooth
" and nail, as soon as it comes to thy
" hands, as if it were scarce possible to
" open it with sufficient speed: when a
" messenger returns, do not hastily rise
" up, and run towards him, as if thou
" could'st not hear what he had to say
" time enough: and if any one makes an
" offer to tell thee something that is new,
" say, that thou had'st rather it were good
" and useful.

" When at a public dissertation, I some-
" time made at Rome, Rusticus (who af-
" terwards perished by the mere envy of
" Domitian) was one of my auditors, a
" messenger comes suddenly in with an
" express from Caesar; upon which, when
" I offered to be silent till he had perused
" the paper, he desired me to proceed;
" nor would so much as look into it, till
" the discourse was ended, and the audience
" dismissed: all that were present much
" admiring the gravity of the man." &c.

Plutarch's Morals. Of Curiosity.
London, 1696.

O E D I P U S.

OEDIPUS.

Why wert thou not deterred by this horrid prediction from giving him to this old man?

PHORBAS.

Moved with compassion for the helpless infant, I delivered him to this shepherd; believing he would keep him in some distant country. But, alas! he was preserved to be a sad example of misfortune. For, oh! if thou art he of whom he speaks, thou art now the most wretched of men.

OEDIPUS.

'Tis done; the horrid mystery is unveiled. I am the murderer of my father, the husband of my mother ----- my destiny is fulfilled ----- Oh sun! these eyes shall never see thee more.



FOURTH INTERLUDE.

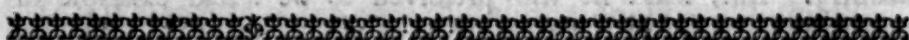
CHORUS.

Oh! wretched race of mortals, how poor, how contemptible do you appear! What is your felicity but the dream of vain opinion? Was ever man more fortunate than Oedipus? Ah! where is now his bliss? One instant saw it born, and vanish; for ever vanish. Oh! Oedipus, warned by thy cruel destiny, let us pronounce no mortal truly happy. Raised to the height of human grandeur, all Fortune's smiles were thine. How great thy glory when thou triumphedst over the Sphinx; when thou becamest the prop of our sinking country, and deliveredst her from the monster that rioted in her blood! How pure thy joy, how just thy pride, when the grateful Thebans chose their preserver for their king. But now, oh miserable reverse of fortune! the whole world cannot produce a man so wretched, so undone, as Oedipus. Alas! great king, into what an horrible abyss of crimes and miseries art thou plunged? The rival of thy father! Ah! why did not those walls*, that nuptial bed, the

* It is surprising that M. Dacier should have translated this passage thus, *How could that bed so many years receive thee, and know thee not?* He tells us himself, that he has

softened Sophocles here. But the thought in the original is so beautiful and so natural, that it may be rendered almost literally into French. The following lines in the Phædra

the witnesses of thy incest, assume a voice to warn thee? Oh marriage most accursed! the husband of thy mother, the child of her whom thou called'st wife. Oh! son of Laius, why wert thou known to us? Why must we view thee thus oppress'd with guilt and woe? Alas! we never can forget, that by thee we were recalled to life; and, ah! by thee we are again covered with the shades of death.



A C T the F I F T H.

SCENE the F I R S T.

CHORUS, an OFFICER belonging to OEDIPUS.

OFFICER.

OH! reverend Thebans, what woes have I to relate to you! If you have still any tenderness remaining for the wretched race of Labdacus, what will be your anguish now! Not all the waters * of the Danube and the Phasis can wash away the abominations of this family. Alas! its secret horrors are all exposed to view. Misfortunes, crimes, and punishments so much the more severe as they are voluntary.

CHORUS.

Can there be any addition to those horrors which we already know?

OFFICER.

Jocasta is no more.

CHORUS.

Unhappy princess! What hand has cut the thread of her life?

OFFICER.

Her own. Seized, as you saw, with all the fury of despair, she entered the palace, flew to her apartment, and closely barred

Phædra of M. Racine have a great resemblance to it.

Je connois mes fureurs, je les rappelle toutes,
Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces
voûtes

Vont prendre la parole, & prêts à m'accuser
Attendent mon époux pour le désabuser.

* The antient as well as modern pagans make it an article of their religion to believe, that the waters of the sea and rivers have the power of cleansing mortals from their sins. The Danube is the most considerable river in Europe, and the Phasis is a river of Colchis.

the doors; then approaching the nuptial bed, abandoned herself to every wild extravagance of grief; she tore off her hair; she invoked the shade of Laius; she reproached him with this offspring of their marriage, this parricide. She reproached herself with a second marriage, the source of so many horrors. She bathed with tears that bed where she had a husband by her husband, and children by her child. At length she expired: but how we could not learn; for at that instant Oedipus alarmed us with the most dreadful cries. The king's despair prevented us from enquiring into the fate of Jocasta. All eyes were fixed on Oedipus. He foamed with rage: he wandered wildly through the palace: he asked for his arms*: he sought Jocasta. Where is she, he cried, whom I call my wife? and who can never be so. Where is this mother of myself and of my children? Where does she hide herself? In vain he sought her. None of us would serve his rage: but, led by some black Divinity, he came to the queen's apartment. As soon as he saw it, he sent forth a horrible cry; and, as if animated by a Fury, he threw himself upon the doors. The doors, barr'd as they were, he burst. Then entering, he runs towards the nuptial bed. The unhappy queen we saw still hanging by the fatal cord that had terminated her days. Oedipus at this sight roars like a lion. He cuts the cord, and throws himself upon the dead body of Jocasta. Alas! what an inhuman spectacle did we then behold! The king, all wild with grief, twisted off the clasp that fastened the queen's mantle, an ornament designed for a far different use. No more, he cried, will I behold the light of day. Oh! sun, these eyes shall shut thee out for ever. Eternal darkness shall hide from me those objects which it is no longer fit for me to view, those fatal fruits of my misfortunes and my crimes. Then suddenly opening his eyelids he tore with a remorseless hand the bleeding balls from out their sockets. Tears mixed with blood flowed down his cheeks. Such is the destiny of this wretched pair. Alas! how great, how happy once! One day, oh! miserable change, one fatal day has ravished from them all their bliss, and left them nothing but insanity, despair, and death.

C H O R U S.

In what condition didst thou leave the unhappy king? Is not his rage abated?

* The Greeks never carried any weapon about them in cities.

O F F I C E R.

He bids his attendants throw open the palace-gates, that he may expose to the view of the Thebans this parricide, this impious wretch, who, by his mother ----- Spare me the repetition of those horrors which in the wildness of his grief escaped him. At length, grown calmer, he declared that he would banish himself for ever from this country: that he will no longer remain in this palace, the witness of those imprecations which he pronounced against himself. But, alas! what will become of him in the helpless state to which his fury has reduced him? Whither will he wander, blind, forlorn, o'erwhelmed with misery? He has need of guides, of succour, of protection ----- but see! the gates are opened. He comes to shew himself to you. Oh dismal sight! * Even thy worst enemy would weep to see thee thus.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

To them O E D I P U S.

C H O R U S.

Oh misery unequalled! Alas! alas! unhappy prince, what Fury has transported thee? What cruel Divinity has heaped upon thee this enormous weight of woe; evils each more horrid than the other! Ah, miserable king! ----- we dare not raise our eyes towards thee, spite of our wishes to see, to speak to thee, to hear thee still: that mangled face strikes us with horror: we groan, we tremble to behold thee.

O E D I P U S.

Where am I now, unhappy wretch! Whither am I wandering! To what solitude shall I drag this load of misery, where utter my complaints! O Fortune, how art thou changed!

* The great Corneille, and his successors in tragedy, were of opinion, that Oedipus, blind and reeking with blood, was a spectacle too horrid to be exposed to the eyes of an audience. M. Dacier has answered them extremely well, in the following verses, from the second canto of Boileau's art of poetry.

Il n'est point de serpent, ni de monstre odieux :
Qui par l'art imité ne puisse plaire aux yeux :
D'un pinceau délicat l'artifice agréable
Du plus affreux objet fait un objet aimable !
Ainsi pour nous charmer la Tragédie en pleurs
D'Oedipe tout sanglant fit parler les douleurs.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

How changed indeed ! Oh, most unhappy prince !

O E D I P U S.

Darkness impenetrable, eternal night, has wrap'd me round. Oh, misery unutterable ! This is the punishment due to my crimes : yet were the points that tore these bleeding balls out, far less sharp than the remorse that wrings me.

C H O R U S.

In misery like thine, these wailings are too just.

O E D I P U S.

My dear, my faithful friends, after the horrors you have known, do you still pity me ? Will you not abandon this criminal, deprived of sight by his own impious hands ? Yet stay, am I not mistaken ? ----- No, I am not. 'Tis you, my friends ; I hear your voices. Buried as I am in thickest darkness I know you still.

C H O R U S.

What barbarity hast thou exercised upon thyself ! Alas ! what cruel God inspired thee with this fury ?

O E D I P U S.

Phœbus, my friends, Phœbus is the cause of all my crimes : but by this hand alone they have been punished. Alas ! ought I to have perceived the light of day ; I, who in every object would have found a source of misery.

C H O R U S.

Oh ! 'tis too true.

O E D I P U S.

What remained for me to view, to hear, to love ? All, all was forbidden me. Ah ! friends, why do you not instantly drive from amongst you this execrable monster, this parricide ; the hate of Gods and men ?

C H O R U S.

Alas ! that wisdom which was once our safety, and our boast, redoubles now the sense of thy calamities, and our compassion. Would to the Gods that thou hadst never known them !

O E D I P U S.

Perish the wretch whose barbarous pity unloosed the fatal cords with which my wounded feet were bound! He snatched me from the arms of death: and for the reward of this detested service may he perish! Oh! had I expired in those woods, what miseries had I spared myself and family!

C H O R U S.

Alas! they are great indeed, since we join in those fruitless wishes.

O E D I P U S.

I had not then, thus in the face of the whole universe, committed parricide and incest: and now behold me loaded with guilt and wretchedness; the offspring of a polluted race; the husband of my mother; the father of my brothers. Oh heaven! thy keenest wrath has fallen on this devoted head.

C H O R U S.

Whatever thy misfortunes may have been, thou hast revenged them too fatally upon thyself. This punishment is more horrid than death.

O E D I P U S.

Ah! on this theme your reasons have no force; your councils are all vain: say how, when descended to the regions of the dead, how shall I dare to view the venerable shades of my parents, murdered by my crimes? But I am punished for them. My fate is more cruel than Jocasta's. Yet I confess I have a father's fondness still: with what soft pleasure should I have beheld my children grown to maturity? That pleasure would have increased with their years: but oh! since my fatal imprecations I have no longer any children: no more a country. Even Thebes itself, this palace, where I first saw light, these walls, these towers, these temples, these images of the Gods, all, all are interdicted to my view. I renounced the sight of them for ever, when that fatal sentence passed my lips against the declared * enemy of the Gods, and of the race of Laius. I am that enemy, that guilty wretch. My infamy is revealed. How then could I enjoy a sight so dear? How could I support their looks? Oh! that it were possible to deprive myself of hearing as well as sight, that, alike deaf and blind, I might close up this

* M. Dacier translates this, *villain* . . . this son of Laius. Therefore he must have read γένος, instead of γένος.

entry to new sorrows. To spare or soften the sense of woe is some relief. Oh! Citheron, why didst thou receive me from the cradle; or why didst thou not afterwards give me death? Why didst thou not conceal me from the knowledge of mankind? Oh Polybus! Oh Corinth! Oh that palace! which I believed my paternal house, what a monster, what an assemblage of crimes and miseries hast thou nourished under the appearance of a monarch's son? And now what remains of this former splendor? A wretch, the wickedest of men; the issue of an abominable race. Oh road of Daulia! Oh forests! Oh thickets! you who have drank the blood of a father, shed by these hands, you have marked with tokens, never to be effaced, the memory of crimes I then committed, and which in Thebes I was to commit. Oh Hymen*! fatal Hymen! thou gavest me life indeed; but oh! thou hast made me violate the sacred veils that wrapt me while unborn; thou hast produced fathers who are the brothers of their children; children, who are the brothers and sisters of their fathers; wives, who are the mothers of their husbands: every abomination, every horror, that the heart of man can conceive----- Oh! 'tis too much----- Blush, blush, thou wretch, to pronounce what has been so horrible to act. Alas! my friends, I conjure you by the Gods, conceal me in some distant place, or give me instant death; plunge me into the lowest abyss of the ocean, that I may no more profane your view. Draw near me; in compassion, I beseech you render me this last kind office. Dare

* This is that beautiful passage quoted by Longinus, to shew, that plurals have an inexpressible magnificence, by the multi-

plicity of objects they present to the mind. M. Despreaux translates it thus:

Hymen, funeste Hymen, tu m'as donné la vie,
Mais dans ces mêmes flancs où je suis renfermé.
Tu fais rentrer ce sang dont tu m'avois formé,
Et par-là tu produis & des fils & des peres,
Des freres, des maris, des femmes, & des meres,
Et tout ce que du sort la maligne fureur
Fit jamais voir au jour & de honte & d'horreur.

I have only broke the measure of the verses; and I will venture to say, that M. Dacier would have done well to have observed the same method. It must be observed however, that neither he nor M. Despreaux have expressed the *aisp' iustitias, sanguinem cognatum*, which separates the fathers, the sons, and the brothers, to point out Oedi-

pus; and the wives and mothers, to indicate Jocasta. This neither Boileau, Dacier, nor Boivin has observed; who confounded these words, *sons, fathers, brothers, husbands, wives, mothers*, which are the necessary consequences of all marriages. For this interpretation I am obliged to the reverend father Tournemine.

to touch this impious wretch ----- Alas! what is it that you fear? My miseries will not fall upon your heads. I am the only mortal who was ever doomed to such accumulated woe.

C H O R U S.

Oh! prince, Creon approaches. He who from henceforth must be the guardian of the kingdom can best answer thy demands, and aid thee with his councils.

O E D I P U S.

Creon! Alas! what can I say to him? Unjust and criminal as I have been towards him, how can I hope he will hear me favourably?

S C E N E the T H I R D.

To them C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Prince, I come not hither to insult those miseries which I lament, nor to load thee with injurious reproaches. I grieve for thy misfortunes ----- But for you, ye Thebans, if you fear not men, yet respect at least this living light of Heaven, whom you behold, this present Deity*. Do you not blush to expose thus to every eye, a hapless victim, loaded with our misfortunes; this miserable king, whom the earth may no longer bear; whom the sacred waters no more dare purify, and who shall never more behold the sun ----- It must not be: bear Oedipus back to the palace. It is just, that those who are connected by the ties of blood should be the only witnesses of the shame of an unhappy family.

O E D I P U S.

Oh! Creon, since, contrary to my expectation, thou provest thyself more good and generous than I have been wicked, suffer me still to implore one favour of thee: believe me, 'tis less my own interest than thine which urges me to ask it.

C R E O N.

Name this favour, prince, which thou so earnestly requestest.

* Georges Ratallerus, Orfatto, and after them M. Boivin, have followed this sense, which is the true one, as the following lines shew, instead of that adapted by M. Dacier,

which is forced. Respect this living lustre of the sun, which illuminates the earth, and which has shewn us the victim, &c.

O E D I P U S.

Banish me instantly from Thebes ; let me be conducted to some place where I may hold converse with no mortal.

C R E O N.

* Prince, to deal plainly with thee, the Oracle has already commanded this. I would have obeyed it ; but respect, tenderness, compassion, all engage me to consult the Gods once more.

O E D I P U S.

They have explained their will. The Oracle is proved. Am I not the impious monster that is to be extirpated from this land?

C R E O N.

It is but too true : however, both thy situation and mine require that I should consult the Gods again.

O E D I P U S.

At least thou wilt believe them, if they confirm their sentence on this unhappy wretch.

C R E O N.

Thy misfortunes are too sad a proof that we ought to believe them.

O E D I P U S.

Hear me, Creon ; the only favour I require, and which I conjure thee not to refuse me, is, to pay the last duties to that unfortunate princess whose corpse lies extended in the palace. Alas ! she was thy sister. To this thou art bound by the laws of justice, by the soft ties of nature. As for me, the disgrace of my country, I will spend the remainder of my miserable days far hence. Suffer me to wander to the deserts, to seek out my true country, Citheron, that fatal mountain which Laius and Jocasta designed for my tomb, from the first moment of my birth. Suffer me to

* I have been here more faithful to the sense than the expressions ; which, according to Dacier's translation, are as follows. *I would have already done it* : that is, I would have banished you already : *if, &c.* The harshness and cruelty of this speech can be only excused by that infinite respect which the ancients paid to Oracles. I have softened it, without departing from the meaning

of Sophocles. This prejudice for Oracles required Creon should obey : but, says the Scholiast, compassion for Oedipus, and the fear of being censured as being an ambitious man, who was willing to take advantage of the king's misfortunes, made it necessary that he should consult the Gods once more.

fulfil their sentence and my own destiny; let me die in the place where they decreed me to finish my days, yet scarce begun. Too well I know, that neither by chance, nor any other accident, shall this disastrous life be terminated *. I have escaped death only to be reserved for miseries more shameful than death itself. Oh! I will abandon myself to my wretched fate; I will fulfil it all ---- But, alas! I am a father ---- I do not recommend my sons to thee. Their age, their valour, will be a sure resource in whatever part of the world they are doomed to wander: but my daughters I leave behind me, their tender years awaken all my pity and my love. Brought up before my eyes †, fed by the hands of a fond father at his table: ah, how changed their fortune! What will become of them now? To thee, oh generous prince! I recommend them. I confide them to thy care. Oh! that it might be permitted to me, if not to see them, yet at least to give them a last embrace, to bathe them with my tears, and weep with them those miseries, of which they must bear the weight. Oh! worthy descendent of so many illustrious ancestors, give me this melancholly consolation. Satisfied with holding them in my arms I shall believe I still enjoy the pleasure of seeing them ----- Ha! what voices are those that strike my ears! Do I not hear the cries of my two afflicted daughters? Has Creon, moved with compassion, already granted my prayer?

S C E N E the F O U R T H.

To them the Daughters of O E D I P U S.

C R E O N.

Yes, prince, I have prevented thy desires, and have brought thee this sad consolation, which thou so ardently didst wish for.

O E D I P U S.

Oh! may the Gods reward this goodness, by granting thee a happier reign than mine ---- Where are you, my dearest children? Approach, and embrace your ----- brother. Kiss these hands,

* See the Oedipus at Colona.

† In the Greek it is literally, *they have always eat at my table: I gave them part of every thing.* M. Dacier says in general, *but for my daughters, these unhappy infants, who have been so tenderly brought up, and accustomed*

to all these soft indulgencies, which distinguish persons of their birth, &c. I thought it necessary to express more particularly those little circumstances which a father enters into. 'Tis an expression of tenderness.

the ministers of my wild rage, which has reduced your father to this miserable state. Acknowledge him, who, without knowing it, has given you birth by her to whom he owes his own ---- Alas! my dearest daughters, I lament your destiny; I weep; this is the only remaining use I have of eyes. I groan for the sad inheritance I bequeath you. Loaded with the infamy of a wretched father, what miserable days will you from henceforth see? At what solemnities, at what feasts, will you dare to appear? Alas! instead of tasting those innocent pleasures, how often will you, with streaming eyes and hearts torn with anguish, be constrained to hide yourselves in solitude; and, when of age to become brides, what father, what mother, will have so little tenderness for their sons as to suffer them to share the ignominy of my race? For oh! what addition can there be made to your calamities; born of a father who murdered his father, who espoused his mother, who formed you in the womb where he himself was formed! Such are the cruel reproaches which will often die your guiltless cheeks with blushes. Who, oh! who will dare to marry you? No, my daughters, you will find no support. The Fates decree, that, despised by the whole world, you shall languish in eternal solitude ---- Oh! son of Meneceus, they have no resource but in thee alone: thou only art their father; for alas! their mother and I are no more. ---- They are thy blood; do not despise them: suffer them not to wander helpless and unprotected, without support, without friends, without husbands. Suffer not the destiny of these innocent princesses to be like that of their wretched father! Oh! look on them with compassion; let their youth touch thy heart, miserable, abandoned as they are. They have no other asylum but in thy goodness. ---- Generous prince, give me thy hand, in token that my prayers are not rejected. And you, my dearest children, if your age rendered you capable of receiving my advice, I would give it you; but listen at least to the last words of a father who quits you for ever: Implore of the Gods, that they will put a short period to my life*; and for yourselves solicit happier days than I have seen.

* M. Dacier has with great judgment substituted *εὐχόμενος*, which makes the sense beautiful here, in the room of *ναίεσθαι*, which is absurd.

O E D I P U S.

C R E O N.

Do not thus feed thy griefs. Retire, prince, into the palace.

O E D I P U S.

How! in that palace, where ----- Well, I will go, since thou wilt have it so: but oh how unwillingly!

C R E O N.

Thou carriest thy grief to excess. Every thing has its period.

O E D I P U S.

Prince, can'st thou guess what fills my labouring mind this moment?

C R E O N.

What is it?

O E D I P U S.

The most earnest wishes to leave this fatal country. Instantly let me quit it.

C R E O N.

The Gods must determine that.

O E D I P U S.

The Gods! Am I not the object of their wrath, and loaded with their curse?

C R E O N.

Well, prince, thy request shall be granted.

O E D I P U S.

Dost thou promise me this?

C R E O N.

My words and sentiments are always the same.

O E D I P U S.

Enough; conduct me hence.

C R E O N.

Let us go, prince: but quit these children.

O E D I P U S.

No; we will never be separated ----- Ah! do not tear them from me ----- Deprive me not of all.

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

* Do not insist upon keeping them. Think what thou hast suffered from the violence of thy passions †.

C H O R U S.

You see this king, oh Thebans! this Oedipus, whose penetrating wit resolved the dark enigmas of the Sphinx; this Oedipus, whose power equalled his wisdom, and who was indebted to himself alone for all his grandeur. You see into what an abyss of misery he is fallen. Learn hence, blind mortals, to turn your eyes upon the closing scene of life, and pronounce ‡ none happy but such as without misfortune have reached that awful moment.

* Creon (as M. Dacier excellently observes) is with reason apprehensive, that in his present miserable state a sudden sally of despair might make him add the murder of his children to his other crimes.

† His obstinate desire to know his birth.

‡ This is a saying of Solon's; which Ovid has thus turned:

*Sed scilicet ultima semper
Exspectanda dies homini est, dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo supremæque funera debet.*



R E M A R K S

U P O N

O E D I P U S.

THE Oedipus of Sophocles has been always considered as the master-piece of antient tragedy, as the Iliad of Homer is in epic poetry, and the Laocoon and Venus of Medicis in sculpture.

This universal esteem, from time immemorial, is warranted by the imitations, and even by the criticisms that have been made of this work. For who, ever thinks of imitating or criticising what is in itself of little value? It is well worth our pains therefore to search into the most secret causes of this general applause: yet without pretending to disguise those defects which are obnoxious to criticism, and to compare the model with the copies that have been made of it by persons who are now dead, and of whom only we are at liberty to speak freely. Such will be the subject of these reflexions.

In order to penetrate into the causes of that pleasure which this piece has never failed to give, it is not necessary to go far into the deep researches of Aristotle; nor to examine, if it be *simple and implex*; and in what sense it be so: whether the catastrophe be single; and if it unites the recognisance with the *peripetie*. When we write for our countrymen we should write in their language, without subjecting ourselves to the restraint of foreign expressions. It will be easily perceived, that nothing can be more regular than the plan of Oedipus: that the unity of place is exact and natural: that the unity of action is no less so: and that the unity of time is so scrupulously observed, that the action of the play takes up no more than the representation. It would be needless also to point out to the judicious reader, that inimitable art with which the scenes, and each part of the whole piece, is connected with the other; so that if any thing was taken away the whole would fall, like a vaulted edifice, where the stones mutually support one another. But to proceed to something of greater importance: for,
however

however necessary and beautiful these qualities are which we have already mentioned, and which are so seldom found together in dramatic compositions, yet it must be acknowledged, that they are not the only ones which constitute a good tragedy: and it is certain, that a tragedy may have all these without being perfect. A building, for example, may have great regularity, great symmetry of parts, yet have neither an advantageous situation, nor a noble air, nor magnificent furniture, nor that elegance and propriety which must contribute to its perfection. Art is one thing, and the delicacies of art another. M. d'Aubignac wrote a tragedy according to the rules; yet it was good for nothing. The reason is, that he play'd the game mechanically, without being able to catch the spirit.

Nothing can be imagined more happy than the subject of Oedipus. It is allowed to be excellent even in our days. What can be grander or more interesting than that the preservation of a whole kingdom should depend upon the discovery of a secret, and the punishment of a crime, the author of which is found to be a great king, who labours with the utmost solicitude to discover the one and punish the other? What more capable of raising curiosity than the enquiries into this secret, and this crime? What at length more striking than the discovery of both, by those very means from which greater obscurity might be expected? But let us enter into the detail, and follow the plan.

The opening is so wonderful, that it is equally impossible to express as not to feel its beauty. It is one of those magnificent pictures which would be worthy the pencil of Raphael. That square, from which a great number of streets are seen at a distance; that palace and portico, which make the back-ground of the picture; that altar, which smokes with incense; that good king, who is met by a company of children, youths, and priests, who all, with branches in their hands, implore his compassion: those temples; those statues of the Gods; and those crowds of people, who surround them. This is a speaking spectacle, and a picture so beautifully disposed, that even the attitudes of the priests and of Oedipus express, without the help of words, that one relates the calamities with which the people are afflicted, and the other, melted at the melancholy sight, declares his impatience and concern for the long delay of Creon, whom he had sent to consult the Oracle. Could Creon come more seasonably? He is expected: they count the moments with anxiety: the safety of the state

state depends upon the answer he brings. He appears: he is pressed to speak: he endeavours to give them hope; but the ambiguity of the Oracle lessens, in some degree, the comfort they derived from his words. Oedipus however retires, fully determined to obey the Oracle, if it be possible, and to discover who was the murderer of Laius. This scene is the beginning of the intrigue; this is the entrance to that theatrical labyrinth in which Oedipus is so soon to lose himself, in order to be found the most wretched of mankind. The first act is concluded with the invocation of the Chorus, which ought certainly to reconcile us to Chorusses: at least, it convinces us, that Sophocles has, in this first picture, displayed all the riches of the most finished design, and all the correctness of the most glowing colours.

The disposition of the second act is the necessary consequence of the preceding. Oedipus appears again; not merely as a king, who weeps over the miseries of his people, but as a king who is active for their relief; as a legislator, whose first act of obedience to the Oracle, is to oblige all his assembled subjects to agree with him in imprecating the most horrible curses on the unknown criminal. ---- What a change! when, at the unravelling the intrigue, he discovers, that he has himself pronounced his own sentence? They consult; they deliberate: the smallest circumstances are thoroughly examined. Tiresias comes; but not uncalled: for Oedipus thinks of every possible expedient to satisfy the Oracle. It would seem, that the piece is now upon the point of being finished, and that the Prophet will explain the whole mystery. He does so indeed: but what probability is there that he should be believed either by Oedipus, the people, or the audience? Oedipus is supposed to be the son of Polybus, not of Laius. Hence arises that beautiful contest between the King and the Prophet; in which the haughty, inquisitive, and impetuous character of Oedipus shows itself. The declaration made by Tiresias becomes an affair of state. The unravelling, which was believed to be so near, is farther off than ever; and the Chorus, thrown back into their former uncertainty, are not able to guess who this criminal is who is sought after so carefully.

In the third picture, Creon, accused of conspiring with Tiresias, justifies himself to no purpose. The rage of Oedipus increases. Jocasta appeases him. She exhorts him to despise the accusations of the Prophet, who charges him with the murder of Laius: and, to discredit the veracity of oracles, she relates the prediction which
Laius.

Laius had received, that he should be murdered by his son. She goes on to acquaint him with the fate of that unhappy son, and the manner in which Laius was murdered in the road to Daulia. How beautiful is this management? The discourse of Jocasta produces an effect quite contrary to what she designed. Oedipus, instead of being comforted, trembles with his apprehensions. He remembers, that he had slain an old man, in the same circumstances Jocasta has described. He begins to suspect, that it is possible he may be the murderer he is in search of: and it may be observed in what manner the intrigue and the solution are so artfully mingled together, that as the plot is entangled it is disentangled at the same time, and entangled again, by two contrary effects produced at once by the same means. This is perceived in the sentence pronounced against the unknown criminal: in the interviews with Tiresias, with Creon, and afterwards with Jocasta; and at length appears plainly in the discourse of the shepherd, upon which all the hopes of Oedipus are founded. For he passes continually from fear to hope; sometimes confounded and dismayed; sometimes half encouraged: never wholly free from his suspicions, and always full of eager curiosity to know his birth. It is these circumstances which make the great movements of the theatrical ballance.

In the fourth design, we see the inquietude of Oedipus is increased; and that his doubts concerning the murder of Laius are so forcibly impressed upon his mind, that Jocasta, to free him from this restless state, becomes, from irreligious and profane, as she at first appears, all on a sudden extremely pious. She goes to consult the Gods. This is an admirable character. In the first act she despises the Gods, and their Oracles: in the second, she is a zealot. The peculiar circumstances she is in produce both these dispositions. As she is going to the temple, to perform her devotions, she meets with the Corinthian shepherd, who removes all her fears concerning the destiny of Oedipus. Farewell piety: she forgets the Gods. Her suspicions are banished by the apparent inconsistency of the Oracle; which had predicted to him, that he should kill his father: and she is informed, that Polybus, his father, is dead. Ought the words of Tiresias then, who accuses him of parricide, to be regarded? But Oedipus, impelled by that curiosity which so strongly marks his character, forces the shepherd, by repeated questions, to acknowledge, that Polybus was not his father. He is now thrown back into all his former suspi-

suspensions. The Corinthian explains himself by degrees: but Oedipus learns neither the name, nor the quality of the person to whom he owes his birth. He had been exposed while an infant. This is all he is told. Hitherto he believes himself to be the son of this shepherd, or of some other slave: and the error he is in hinders him from being alarmed at the consternation of the queen, already acquainted with the whole mystery, and at her precipitate departure. There is a necessity for having recourse to Phorbas; who at length appears; and, by his reluctance to answer the questions that are proposed to him, unfolds the fatal secret. Thus Oedipus, by his restless curiosity to discover the whole mystery, discovers it at length, to his misfortune. He finds he has murdered his father, and been the husband of his mother. What an intrigue, what an unravelling is here! How complicated both! But what an involution of both one and the other, and what a chain of events, which, like waves, destroy one another!

In the fifth and last picture, we have on one side a relation of the fatal death of Jocasta, by her own hands. On the other, Oedipus bleeding from his wound, who comes to vent his sorrows and despair. He blushes while he unveils the enormity of his crimes, or rather the horror of his destiny, by the punishment he has inflicted upon himself. He would have the one compared with the other; and he even paints his crimes, as greater than his misfortunes. Punished by his own hands, and bound by the sentence he has pronounced, he thinks little of his fall, from the highest prosperity to the last degree of wretchedness. His fate, so full of guilt, is ever present to his mind. The most forceable expressions seem to him but poorly to represent his misery; and the striking contrast of a king, who, from happy and beloved, becomes in one day the execration of his people and the out-cast of the earth, although pitiful, gives in his opinion, but a slight idea of what he feels. ---- Laius, Jocasta, Citheron, are the names he calls upon incessantly. He dares not pronounce that of father, or of husband. But returning tenderness makes him wish to take an everlasting leave of his daughters. The children are brought to him: he holds them close embraced in his arms: he bathes them with bloody tears. What emotions of grief and tenderness must not such a spectacle produce! Creon at length endeavours to persuade him to retire into his palace; and can no otherwise suspend the violence of his despair, than by promising him to obtain, as a
favour

favour from the Gods, that banishment to which he had condemned himself.

Let us now take these several paintings, and reunite them together; and we shall find, that they all form but one tragic picture. A mere painter can represent a single instant only. Tragedy reunites several in one point of view. It is the same picture, diversified from one end to the other. The same dispositions, the same proportions, the same end. In the Oedipus of Sophocles the general disposition is above all criticism: the proportions are scrupulously exact, and the end so grand and striking, that it becomes the true source of that pleasure which this piece inspires. By the end I mean that inexplicable interest which at first excites curiosity, and increases it in proportion as it satisfies it. Whoever reads Oedipus, and is in the least degree attentive to his own emotions, will find, that he passes from fear to hope, and from hope to fear, to arrive at last to compassion mixed with terror: happy effect of that interest which is diffused throughout the work, like life in every part of the body! The character of each personage in the drama is strongly marked, and so well supported, that they all in concert contribute to those alternate emotions, occasioned by the two Oracles. A very simple movement, for a machine, which, by its effects, appears to be composed of innumerable parts, and yet has in itself nothing of complication. All is useful, all necessary: there is not one superfluous scene: not one episode; nor the smallest part that could be retrenched. In a word, it is interesting to the highest degree; and what is it that charms us in all the beauties of nature, or of art, but that affecting quality? It makes the grace and soul of tragic beauty: and this it is that has united all the suffrages in favour of Oedipus; except of those, perhaps, whose imaginations are not strong enough to transport them to the theatre of Athens, and to make them for a moment forget that of Paris.

But we will now take a view of the objections which may be made to this tragedy of Sophocles. I shall forbear to mention such as turn upon the obscurity of the text, the manners of the Greeks, and such trifling matters. They do not deserve to be enquired into: and the only answer that ought to be given is, to refer those by whom they are made either to the text, or to the Athenian *pit*. It will be sufficient to repeat one of this kind, and which seems to be the most reasonable. ----- Why did not Oedipus kill himself? The answer is easy. ----- He had no weapon.

It was not the custom to wear any. He asked for arms: his attendants refused to bring them; and opposed the madness of his grief. Thus reduced to use as a weapon whatever first presented itself, he snatches a clasp from the robe of his dead wife, and with it he tears out his eyes. A punishment which bears so much the greater conformity to his misfortunes, as it appears to him to be more dreadful than that death which he envies Jocasta. Nothing can be more simple than the solution of this question; and Sophocles has taken care to furnish it.

He is reproached with a more capital fault than this, which Aristotle has observed. How was it possible to suppose that Oedipus could either neglect to revenge the death of Laius, or be ignorant of the manner of it? He had been married to Jocasta several years; was it not highly probable, that he would be informed of every circumstance relating to the murder of his predecessor, and that he would cause a strict search to be made for the perpetrators of so horrid a crime? Aristotle* indeed, who has observed, endeavours to excuse this fault, by saying, that it is a circumstance foreign to the piece: that it does not enter into the composition of the subject; and that Sophocles, finding himself under a necessity of making use of this improbable circumstance, has, with great judgment, avoided placing it within the action of his piece, in which he ought to be imitated by all tragic poets; who in the like difficulty ought to make whatever is improbable, or without reason, either precede or follow the action. But even this excuse shews, that it is much better to avoid an improbability, though it does not enter immediately into the action: and this fault, though canonised by Aristotle, is not less a fault. But it will be more readily pardoned, as it is the source of all the marvellous in the tragedy; since every thing depends upon that happy ignorance of Oedipus, who, in seeking what he is ignorant of, finds more than he would have been willing to know.

M. Dacier sees but this one fault in the whole play. Others, less ardent in their admiration of Sophocles, see an act too much in it. And this is the fifth. The piece, say they, is finished in the fourth act, after the discovery made by Phorbas and the Corinthian shepherd. There is indeed some foundation for this charge. Oedipus knows his birth. The criminal is discovered. The sentence he pronounced is fallen upon himself. Yet it can-

* Poetics, chap. 15 & 16.

not be said, that the action is absolutely terminated, for these reasons. First, the Oracle of Apollo is not obeyed; for it was not only necessary, that the criminal should be discovered, but that he should be banished likewise. Now this must be done by the king and the people: for they made the law. The decision of the people therefore, and of Creon, who sees himself raised to the throne by the misfortunes of Oedipus, must be waited for. Secondly, it was so unlikely that this criminal should be found to be the king himself, that it cannot be supposed the sentence should be executed behind the scene, as it would have been, had the criminal been only a private person. The nature of the crime, and the criminal, certainly suspends, and in some degree prolongs the action. Thirdly, Besides the murder of Laius, the perpetrator of which is discovered, there is also a complication of fatal accidents which must be revealed, in order to come to this first crime: I mean, parricide and incest: accidents which, having made part of the intrigue, ought also to make part of the *dénouement*, or untying it. The spectator surely would not have been satisfied, if he was left ignorant of the destiny of Jocasta, Oedipus, and his family, who are all involved in the same misfortune, by the discovery of more than they sought to know. The discovery ought always to be conformable to the intrigue. The concatenation of the two Oracles, and the two crimes, one of which leads to the knowledge of the other, must all be unravelled; and this could not be done completely, unless the spectator is informed, that Jocasta is punished; and that Oedipus, now the most miserable of mankind, is preparing to undergo the sentence he pronounced; that he is deprived of sight by his own hands; and that at length his hapless posterity is drag'd down the precipice he led them to. I add moreover, that the end of the piece being a double affair of state, in which the preservation of the people is concerned, and the race of Laius for ever deprived of the kingdom, it is necessary that the event should be conformable to this end, as the unravelling of the intrigue should be conformable to the intrigue itself. After all, if the critics will obstinately maintain, that this fifth act may be wholly omitted, without any prejudice to the piece, yet it cannot be denied, that it is admirably well blended with it. It is so pathetic, and heightens in such a manner the agitation of the drama, that it well deserves our indulgence, in not examining too rigorously, if its connexion with the rest be necessary, or only barely useful at best. We would have readily pardoned the two last acts of the

Horatii of Corneille, if they had been as happily added as this last act of Oedipus with the rest.

The first thing that strikes, and which I have reserved for my last examination, is the subject itself: the foundation of which seems faulty in the opinion of many. What is the crime of Oedipus? they say. An insolent fellow reproaches him to his face with his being a foundling, and not the son of Polybus. Upon this he goes to consult the Oracle of Delphos. The God, instead of answering his question, predicts to him, that he shall murder his father, and be the husband of his mother. Oedipus, by the silence of Apollo, being confirmed in his opinion, that Polybus is his father, is so truly virtuous, that, to avoid the possibility of accomplishing this horrible prediction, he banishes himself from his country, wanders as chance directs, and at last arrives at Thebes. There fortune smiles upon him. He confounds the Sphinx; becomes king of Thebes, and the husband of Jocasta. And most certainly he is ignorant, that it is his mother who is his wife. In all this, if there be any crime, it is Apollo, and not Oedipus, who is guilty. Yet it is Oedipus who suffers for this crime. And by what a dreadful punishment! We will answer these articles severally. And, first, it is clear, that, laying aside all theology, either pagan or Christian, Sophocles has made Oedipus criminal. But in what does his guilt consist? it will be asked. I answer in this, that he murdered an old man in the road to Delphos. It is true he thought himself insulted by that old man. This circumstance extenuates, but does not acquit him of guilt: for a moderate man would have examined into the nature of the dispute, and have taken care to be informed of the rank of the person to whom he was required to give way. Yet more, although as a good king he loves his people, yet he has the vices of a private man, and even of an imprudent king. He is cholerick, proud, and inquisitive, to excess. Such is the picture which Sophocles has drawn of him. Oedipus therefore is not an irreproachable prince. Nor would the rules of tragic art have permitted, that a perfectly virtuous man should be loaded with misfortunes. I acknowledge, that Oedipus seems not to merit those miseries to which he ignorantly condemned himself. But it is this which makes the delicacy of the art; which consists in setting to shew, a man whose crimes are small, and misfortunes great. As to the involuntary crimes of Oedipus, Apollo has predicted them, and they are ratified by Fate. Such is the pagan theology. Inevitable

evitable destiny is the great hinge upon which it turns. It would be an injury to the reader to load these remarks with a great number of extracts from antiquity, which are easy enough to compile, but very tiresome to read. A very superficial knowledge of the Greeks and Latins is sufficient for this purpose, and without going further than the tragic poets, who are better commentators upon each other than their several commentators upon them, we shall find no tragedy in which destiny is not regarded as the soul of all that passes here. Yet free will is not without a place in this strange theology; for they make a proper distinction between voluntary crimes and those which proceed merely from the force of destiny. It is very probable, that by settling the true value of terms, the Greeks will be found to acknowledge a real free will, and only an imaginary destiny, especially when they speak as philosophers. Their justice in distributing rewards and punishments shew this more plainly than their writings, and it appears even in their writings, of which Plato's are a proof. But as the poets in their tragedies address themselves to the people, and consequently adopt a popular manner of speaking, they allow a great deal to fate and very little to free will, without considering how difficult it is to reconcile these two opinions. In effect, notwithstanding the lights we derive from Christianity, we find, that self-love has such influence over us, that we excuse our errors and vices by this popular language: *It was my destiny; my stars would have it so.* Some distinction must therefore be made between the different manners of speaking on this subject. But, without entering into the examination, we may lay it down as a certain principle, that among the antients fatality was the prime mover of all great events. In this supposition, if we would receive pleasure from a Greek drama, we are obliged for a few moments to adopt their system. It is absurd indeed; but we must forget it is so, since it did not appear such to the Grecian spectators, with whom we mix. If we should represent a French prince on our theatre avowing these pagan notions, he would be hissed; but Augustus might do so, and there would be no impropriety in it. Let us be equally just to Oedipus, and not condemn him on the very principle which renders him most interesting.

One perceives by this, the passions are much interested. We need only unfold, if it be possible, this secret sentiment. If Oedipus was a flagitious wretch, who voluntarily abandoned himself to all those crimes which he commits, without being able to

avoid them, he would raise indignation in us equal to that we feel at the recital of those wicked actions whose authors are condemned to the severest punishment, and whose memory we would erase from mankind. If he was absolutely perfect, this indignation would not be less; but it would fall upon the Gods, who decree those miseries which he has not merited. But Oedipus being criminal but in a small degree, and miserable in a very great one, with excellent qualities, and some virtues, he excites in us a mixed sentiment, or rather a sentiment of a particular kind. For this double indignation is then changed into compassion for Oedipus, and fear of the Gods, who punish even involuntary crimes in a person who is not wholly free from guilt. Hence arises that sympathetic concern for ourselves blended with our compassion; which restrains us from committing the same faults that we see are productive of such fatal consequences. This is the pure doctrine of Aristotle, or rather that of nature, or true wisdom. We have remaining some French tragedies of this kind, among others the Phedra of Racine, which shall be spoke of in its place. Racine has not neglected to place the incestuous passion of Phedra to the account of destiny, for the reasons I have already mentioned. We will now proceed to the other plays upon this subject.

Euripides wrote a tragedy upon the story of Oedipus. But there are only a few fragments of it remaining, from whence we cannot form any judgment of it.

T H E
O E D I P U S
O F
S E N E C A.

THAT there were two Senecas who flourished at the same time under the reign of Nero, cannot be doubted after what Martial says :

Duosque Senecas, unicumque Lucanum
Facunda loquitur Corduba.

Cordoba boasts of two Senecas, and a Lucan. It would be a useless task to enquire whether these three celebrated men were relations, and in how near a degree: a circumstance that cannot be certainly known; but that they were allied in wit is unquestionable. If we read the *Pharsalia*, the Latin tragedies, and those treatises of philosophy which have been produced by them, we shall be convinced that their genius's were cast in the same mold. It is equally unnecessary, and much more difficult, to determine to which of the two Senecas the tragedies ought to be attributed; and whether great part of the ten was not written by another hand. Neither Tacitus, Juvenal, Martial, or Quintilian, acquaint us with any thing which can fix these points of erudition. Seneca the philosopher composed some verses. This is all they tell us. It is better to be satisfied with this general knowledge, than to enter with the learned into minute discussions, to know whether we ought to give one tragedy to Seneca the philosopher, another to the other Seneca his son, his brother, or his nephew, and sometimes to nameless authors. For in this manner have Heinsius and many others distributed the Latin tragedies, each according to his fancy. In all this there is nothing solid or convincing. We will therefore confine ourselves to the examination of the pieces themselves, without having any regard to their authors. But before I speak of the *Oedipus*, I think it necessary to observe

observe in general, that there is as much difference between the Greek and Latin tragedies, which have come down to us, as between the just taste of the Ionic, Doric, or Corinthian architecture, and the degenerate one of the Gothic. A comparison so much the more exact, as that the whole art of the Latin tragic authors, whom I shall from henceforth comprize under the single name of Seneca, consists in extravagant paintings, like those enormous pillars, which the eye can with difficulty take in, and in sentences and brilliant thoughts, which have indeed the true merit of the delicate workmanship, and those stars which we see in Gothic structures.

But to shew that I am not singular in an opinion, which may likewise seem very presumptuous to those judges who have all given their suffrages in favour of Seneca, I shall quote here a passage from Lipsius. * “ There are two tragedies of the two Senecas, says he, which I look upon as master-pieces. I am “ their panegyrist, and not their censor. (He means the Medea “ and the Thebaid. A most extravagant piece, as we shall see.) “ In other pieces I find many beauties; but not without a mixture of errors. Scaliger is never weary of praising them, and “ even prefers them to the Greek tragedies. In which he cannot be sincere, unless he means those two I have just mentioned.” Justus Lipsius shews himself very moderate in passing over so slightly this absurd judgment of Scaliger.) “ As for the “ other pieces, says Justus Lipsius, they are far from meriting “ such a panegyric. There is great grandeur in the composition, “ and a tragic interest throughout the whole. But there is also “ much affectation and bombast. The style and diction are not “ always pure. Sentences there are indeed in great plenty, and “ those wonderfully witty. But we often meet also with abortive sentences; that is to say, thoughts obscure, mean, and “ trifling; which strike us at the first reading, and on closer attention became ridiculous: for they are not rays of light, but “ glimmering sparks. They are not the lively strokes of a vigorous imagination, but the vain efforts of dreams and reveries. “ Let us add, that these thoughts are incessantly presenting themselves to us. For the poet seizes them where-ever he can: he “ does not wait for them. After all, this may not perhaps be so “ much his fault as the fault of the age in which he lived;

* J. Lipsi. animad. in trag. quæ L. Ann. Senecæ tribuantur.

wherein

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“ wherein a pedantic and declamatory taste prevailed, so far, says Quintilian, that it made the beauty of compositions of every kind to consist in sentences.”

This, if I am not mistaken, is a true portrait of the Latin tragedies which have come down to us. Seneca has followed, or rather thinks he has followed, the same path with Sophocles in his conduct of Oedipus. But we shall soon be convinced, that he has wandered far from his guide.

ACT THE FIRST.

Oedipus, accompanied by Jocasta, opens the scene, with a long speech, consisting of more than eighty verses, rather swelling than grand, or magnificent. But why does he appear? We know not. And what does he say? Why he tells us, that “ the day is breaking forth, and displays the calamities of the night.” Five verses are employed to express this thought, which loses all its beauty by the ornaments with which it is loaded. Then follows a common declamation upon the condition of kings, who are as much exposed to dangers upon the throne, as a vessel on the ocean. Oedipus then enters into the subject, and gives Jocasta a relation of the Oracle he had received at Corinth; and, notwithstanding his flight, and all the precautions he takes to avoid a possibility of killing his father, and marrying his mother, his mind continues in an anxious state, and a thousand inquietudes perplex him; but it is not easy to guess why. For, besides that he is no longer in Corinth, he is represented so virtuous, that, terrified at the Oracle of Apollo, he suspects not himself; *neque non credo mihi*: and a moment afterwards he is ready to imagine, that the plague and all those calamities with which Thebes is afflicted are the punishments of a predicted crime, which he has not accomplished. He says, that he is loaded with the fatal necessity of accomplishing this frightful Oracle, *Phœbi reus*; and that he has made even heaven itself criminal. *Fecimus cœlum nocens*. This is making a most outrageous use of the doctrine of inevitable fate. He describes the pestilence more like an orator, who labours his description, than like a great monarch. How infinite the difference between the first scene of the Greek poet and this of the Latin one, were we only to consider them even by this description! One is a beautiful statue, the other a monstrous colossus. I spare the reader the translation of this act. Not that there are not some sublime strokes in it, as this for instance: *Excess of grief dries up the spring*

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of tears: *quodque in extremis solet, periere lacrymæ.* But are these sublime thoughts properly introduced? --- In conclusion, Oedipus, weary of a throne, surrounded with so many miseries, of which he believes himself the cause, though innocent, resolves to quit it, and to fly to his relations: *vel ad parentes.* Jocasta exhorts him to be patient, and seems to accuse him with want of fortitude. This reproach gives the king an opportunity of relating his great exploits. At length he declares, that he has no other resource than Apollo, whom he has caused to be consulted. The Chorus afterwards bears its part in some very fine verses upon the plague; with which they finish the first act.

ACT THE SECOND.

In the second act the sight of Creon throws Oedipus at first into some concern; but less naturally than in Sophocles, where this prince, full of impatience for his return, only cries out; *Ab! my dear Creon, what answer do you bring from the Oracle? Speak.* This simplicity is not in the taste of Seneca. After some clashing sentences Creon, in an elaborate speech, pronounces the Oracle. This Oracle is twofold, and obscurely intimates, that the murderer of Laius is a stranger; and that this stranger is the husband of his mother. Hereupon Oedipus immediately pronounces a sentence of excommunication against the criminal; and this in the style of the Pharsalia. He afterwards, as if by chance, asks Creon, in what place the murder was committed? The reader cannot surely perceive any imitation of Sophocles here.

Tiresias and his daughter Manto enter, to perform a sacrifice. The Prophet is brought thither by Apollo, without any other preparation: *sorte Phæbeâ excitus.* The author is not very scrupulous with regard to propriety, when he is to introduce or dismiss his actors. This scene is all action and shew. It might be thought beautiful if the unnatural pomp of the diction did not spoil it. However, it is wholly the invention of Seneca. Tiresias, in order to discover the criminal, performs, by his daughter, all the ceremonies of a solemn sacrifice, which is impossible to be shewn upon the theatre. After a solemn prayer is made, the altar smokes with incense: the libations follow, from whence the auguries are taken. The victims for the sacrifice are a heifer and a bull. The heifer falls at the first stroke. The bull endeavouring to shun the light, receives two strokes: his blood pours in streams from his eyes, and the miserable remains of life that are left him, are
more

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more terrible than death. The poet here represents enigmatically the destiny of Jocasta and Oedipus. It is in this that the beauty of the scene consists. The rest is a hideous description of entrails, which pant and move about in a very extraordinary manner. The heart sinks and disappears. The black blood streams from new issues. In a word, we have a detail of pagan anatomy, which inspires the utmost horror. The enigma is continued, and even the incest of Oedipus and Jocasta is figuratively represented. But, as if this spectacle was not sufficient for the Spanish enthusiasm of the poet, Tiresias, who had gained but little information from the sacrifice, from which the audience have learned too much, reserves to himself the task of consulting the infernal powers, and of invoking the Shades. In the mean time, he commands the Chorus to sing a hymn to Bacchus; probably, because Bacchus was one of the tutelary Gods of Thebes; and the Chorus obey.

ACT THE THIRD.

Creon returns after the magic ceremony is over, and hesitates long before he will relate the event of it to the king. Seneca gives us here a contest of sentences, some of which are very beautiful. The scene begins thus.

OEDIPUS.

The concern I see upon thy countenance denounces nothing but misfortune ----- Yet speak ----- What victim do the Gods require?

CREON.

It is thy command, that I should speak; but fear forces me to be silent.

OEDIPUS.

If thou can'st not be moved by the misery of expiring Thebes, yet sure the interest of the queen, thy sister, will have some weight with thee.

CREON.

Soon wilt thou wish thou wert ignorant of what thou with so much ardency desirest to know.

OEDIPUS.

Ignorance of evils is but a barren remedy. --- But art thou then obstinately determined to conceal a mystery, upon which the safety of Thebes depends.

M 2

CREON.

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CREON.

When the remedy is shameful, the cure is odious.

OEDIPUS.

Speak, I command thee, or dread the vengeance of an offended king.

CREON.

Truth is displeasing to kings, even when they require it.

OEDIPUS.

Explain this secret sacrifice, or thou shalt be the victim.

CREON.

Permit me still to be silent. This is the only freedom that can be obtained of kings.

OEDIPUS.

An insolent silence is often more dangerous to the king and state than the freest speech can be.

CREON.

What then remains to do, since silence is prohibited? &c.

" OEDIPUS. Et si ipse vultus flebiles præfert, notas,

" Expone cujus capite placemus Deos.

" CREON. Fari jubes, tacere quæ suadet metus.

" OEDIPUS. Si te ruentes non satis Thebæ movent,

" At sceptræ moveant lapsa cognatæ domûs.

" CREON. Nescire cupies, nosse quæ nimium expetis.

" OEDIPUS. Iners malorum remedium ignorantia est:

" Itane & salutis publicæ indicium obrues?

" CREON. Ubi turpis est medicina: sanari piget.

" OEDIPUS. Audita fare: vel malo domitus gravi

" Quid arma possint regis irati scies.

" CREON. Odere reges dicta quæ dici jubent.

" OEDIPUS. Mitteris Erebo vile pro cunctis caput,

" Arcana sacri vocæ nî retegis tuâ.

" CREON. Tacere liceat. Nulla libertas minor

" A rege petitur. OEDIP. Nempè vel lingua

" magis

" Regi atque regno muta libertas obest.

" CREON. Ubi non licet filere, quid cuiquam licet?" &c.

Creon afterwards gives a more than infernal description of all he has seen: yet he stops a long time to describe the place where the magical ceremonies were performed, before he proceeds to the story. He comes to it at length: but in what terms does he relate it! The earth opens. What terrors follow! The finest passage here, were it not spoiled by that swelling style, which, as I have before observed, every where prevails, would be that wherein the shades of the kings of Thebes are supposed to appear. Laius rises in his turn, and reveals the whole abomination of the marriage of Oedipus, and the crime he has committed. But Oedipus, who believes himself to be the son of Polybus, is violently enraged at this recital, and accuses Creon and Tiresias of having entered into a conspiracy to dethrone him. Creon defends himself as Sophocles makes him do. But in all this there is neither connexion nor taste. The scene, as it began, is closed with sentences: and the Chorus, as usual, perform their part; that is to say, they sing some verses, which are very little to the purpose.

ACT THE FOURTH.

Oedipus appears again, under some anxiety, on account of the murder of Laius; which both heaven and hell charge upon him, altho' he is not conscious of the crime. Apparently his thoughts have been busy upon this point. He therefore relates to Jocasta his adventure in the road to Daulia, where he had slain an old man. He desires his wife to acquaint him with the circumstances of Laius' murder; and he finds they all agree with what happened to him in that fatal meeting. "I hold myself guilty," he cries: *teneo nocentem*. He believes he is the murderer then; and now behold him already convinced. This is not the conduct Sophocles has observed. According to him Oedipus is not persuaded, that it is he who murdered Laius, till he knows that Laius is his father. But we will return to Seneca. An old man comes from Corinth, to acquaint Oedipus with the death of Polybus. This is the Greek scene; but subtilised. The old man proceeds to tell the king, that he is not the son of Polybus; and that he received him, when an infant, from a shepherd belonging to Laius. Oedipus orders this shepherd to be sent for: but all this has an air which enervates, or rather destroys, the inimitable art of the Greek poet. Phorbas arrives: Oedipus forces him to speak; and Phorbas removes the veil from before his eyes by these words,
 "The

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"The child you mention was the offspring of your wife:" *Conjuge est genitus tuâ.* The Chorus afterwards declaim.

ACT THE FIFTH.

The fifth act consists of two scenes, one of which is a relation of the furious despair of Oedipus. Nothing can be more tragicomic. For Oedipus draws his sword (he should not have one), and instead of plunging it in his breast, he theatrically exhorts himself to die. But, fortunately for him, he reflects, that one death is too little for his crimes; and that he ought to multiply his punishment by living miserable; that is to say, *dying to live, and still renewed, to die.*

" ---- Iterum vivere, atque iterum mori.
 " Liceat, renasci semper: ut toties nova
 " Supplicia pendas, utere ingenio miser,
 " Quod sæpe fieri non potest, fiat diu."

To support this sentiment, there is a necessity for all the wit he is master of, and he makes good use of it, as we shall see presently. It is probable, that he has returned his sword into the scabbard; for he mentions it no more. He bethinks himself of tearing out his eyes: another deed described in the same strain. "For my eyes, says he, ought to follow my tears; to weep is too little." His eyes obey him; with difficulty they keep their places, and they run before his destructive hands. *Vulneri occurrunt suo.* It is not enough for Oedipus to have his eyes in his hand; he must mangle their sockets.

" ---- Hæret in vacuo manus,
 " Et fixa penitus unguibus lacerat cavos
 " Altè recessus luminum & inanes sinus;
 " Sæviturque frustra, plusque quàm sat est, furit."

One would think this might be sufficient. But still it is too little. Oedipus fears the light so much, that he raises his head to be convinced whether he is totally blind or not; and, to make all sure, tears out the smallest fibres. Such exaggerations are the consequences of leaving nature and truth to run after wit.

After a few lines sung by the Chorus, Jocasta and Oedipus make up a scene between them. This is the second, and the last in the act. Jocasta doubts, whether she ought to call Oedipus her son, or her husband. She refines upon this thought, as well as Oedipus;
 who

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who supposes he sees Jocasta, because he hears her speak. She lays all that is past to the account of her destiny, and she has reason for it. But why then kill herself? for she kills herself a moment afterwards, declaiming strangely; while Oedipus, who accuses himself of having murdered her, and of being doubly a parricide, inveighs against Phœbus, who pronounced the Oracle, and precipitately condemns himself to banishment. He carries with him grief, famine, and disease. This last idea, which we meet with twice in the same piece, is very beautiful.

This short abridgment is sufficient to shew the genius and manner of Seneca. The versification is in general very fine; but always swelled, if I may be allowed the metaphor, with a certain poetical hydropsy; which is extremely disgusting. There ought indeed to be a great difference between tragic and comic versification; but this difference should not be carried so far, as to make the language barbarous. For example, Terence makes Chremes say, very properly, * *Luscescit hoc jam: the day begins to appear*. And Seneca also, with equal judgment, begins his Oedipus thus:

“ Jam nocte pulsa dubius affulsit dies.”

The morning, with a faint and doubtful light, now comes to dissipate the shades of darkness.

One is the language of comedy, the other of tragedy. But in the following verses there is an unnatural pomp of expression:

“ Et nube mœstum squallida exoritur jubar,

“ Lumenque flamma triste luctifera gerens,” &c.

The sad star of day slowly breaks forth from a black cloud, that marks its sorrow, and its ill-boding beams, shed but a faint and melancholly gleam.

One had need to be extravagantly fond of Lucan to approve of Seneca here.

† “ Qui Baviium non odit, amet tua Carmina, Mœvi.”

* Terent. Heautontim, Act 3. S. 1. v. 1.

† Virg. Ecl. 6. v. 90.

THE
OEDIPUS
OF

PETER CORNEILLE.

THIS piece is too well known to need an exact analysis of it. If we but slightly follow the plan of it, we shall recal the whole to remembrance, and see in what it differs from Sophocles, and what other kind of beauty it may lay claim to.

Corneille declares, that he thought himself obliged to treat this subject in a manner very different from the Greek and Latin poets *; “because, says he, I have discovered, that what appeared wonderful in the age of Sophocles and Seneca (he might have excepted the latter), would seem horrible in ours: that the eloquent description of the manner in which the unfortunate Oedipus tears out his eyes, which takes up the whole fifth act, would offend the delicacy of our ladies, and their disgust would necessarily draw along with it that of the rest of the audience; and, lastly, that love having no share in the incidents of this tragedy, it wanted those principal beauties which are always sure to please.” It is not to be doubted, but that the great Corneille was mortified at the necessity this prevailing taste laid him under, which makes him speak in this manner, and take merit to himself from overthrowing one of the finest subjects for tragedy in all antiquity, to introduce love into it as the principal source of the action.

ACT THE FIRST.

Theseus king of Athens, who is in love with Dirce, the daughter of Laius and Jocasta, opens the scene with her. The whole is a display of tender sentiments, in very beautiful versification. Dirce is afflicted to see her lover exposed to the malignity of the

* In the Critique upon Oedipus.

contagion, which depopulates Thebes, she urges him to quit the country. Theseus refuses to go; and pleads the example of his mistress, whom decency will not permit to leave her family upon this occasion. He then proposes an expedient to secure Dirce and himself from the attacks of the plague, which is to hasten their marriage, and to solicit the consent of Oedipus. This little incident in the hands of so great a master produces a very gallant scene, but misplaced, notwithstanding all the precautions he uses to cover so visible a defect. Such however is the opening which will make a part of the intrigue, and which influences the whole action: an opening and intrigue very different from those of Sophocles. Corneille had reason to boast of the art he has shewn in the conduct of his Oedipus. For indeed a great deal was necessary, to palliate a contrast so shocking as that of a love distress, and the desolation caused by a pestilence.

Oedipus, for reasons of state, receives this proposal unfavourably. Theseus discovers that he has a rival in Æmon, the nephew of Jocasta: but this rival is not a king. This scene, barren as it appears, is treated like a master; and in general the poet's art exceeds, or rather renders the subject supportable throughout the whole piece. For there is scarce a scene of which the foundation is not either trifling or faulty; but at the same time all have a gradation of thoughts and sentiments, and an effort of genius which almost out of nothing creates those beautiful contests which Corneille alone knew the secret of using well.

Theseus, thus rejected, speaks like a king to Oedipus, who equally well supports his dignity. The latter in the following scene explains to his confidant the secret of his politics. He is apprehensive, that Dirce, a haughty princess, whose character is well marked, should prevail upon her lover to add the sceptre of Athens to that of Thebes, which she thinks she is unjustly deprived of by a stranger, as Oedipus is.

Jocasta, in order to bring this policy, which Corneille makes the soul of his piece, into action, comes to tell Oedipus, that she has in vain pressed the princess her daughter to marry Æmon; that she detests him, and will have no other husband than Theseus. But that, after all, he ought not to think this conduct blameable. It must be remembered here, that it is a mother who speaks, a mother desirous of disculpating her daughter. For says Jocasta, at length,

“ La condamneriez-vous, si vous n'étiez son roi.”

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This is one of those scenes which have very little in them, and which is wholly supported by the art of the poet. During this conversation Dymas, who had been sent to consult Apollo concerning the pestilence, arrives; but brings no answer. The Gods are mute. Oedipus attributes their silence to the inhumanity of Jocasta, who had caused her son to be exposed: and she imputes it to their having neglected to revenge the murder of Laius. This artifice is singular enough: upon which Oedipus says,

“Pouvions-nous en punir des brigands inconnus,
 “Que peut-être jamais dans ces lieux on n’a vûs.
 “Si vous m’avez dit vrai, peut-être ai-je moi-même
 “Sur trois de ces brigands vengé le diadème,
 “Au lieu même, au tems même, attaqué seul par trois
 “J’en laissai deux sans vie, & mis l’autre aux abois.
 “Mais ne négligeons rien, & du royaume sombre
 “Faisons par Tirésie évoquer la grande ombre,” &c.

This is a turn of which Corneille was very fond, and which is very artful, as we shall find in the sequel.

ACT THE SECOND.

As Dirce must necessarily be the hinge upon which the whole tragedy turns, since Corneille thought himself obliged to introduce an episode, instead of following the plan of Sophocles, this princess has an interview with Oedipus, which is contrived by Jocasta. Dirce speaks with a haughtiness which she supports throughout the play, and in which she shines so much, that she is almost always the first character in it. When Oedipus presses her to marry Æmon, she answers haughtily,

“Je vous ai déjà dit, Seigneur, qu’il n’est pas roi.”

A thought which multiplies and grows so fast under the poet’s hands, that it forms one of the finest scenes in the tragedy. But we have taken up a great deal of time already with the episode, which is indeed almost the whole play; *non erat bis locus*. There is, however, in this pompous scene a maxim which seems inconsistent with the character of Dirce; who, as we shall see presently, offers herself as a victim for the safety of Thebes.

“Le peuple est trop heureux quand il meurt pour ses rois.”

In

THE OEDIPUS OF CORNEILLE. 91

In the following scene, between this princess and her confidant, the heroic sentiments of the former are carried much farther, and convince the audience, that Dirce is not the dupe of the king's politics. She has guessed his secret; and this is sufficient to acquit her of ingratitude to Oedipus.

We have next a recital of the Oracle pronounced by the shade of Laius. This Oracle is very obscure. Laius says, that *the blood of his race* must expiate the crime, which had been suffered to pass unrevenged by man, and put an end to the punishment it had drawn from heaven. Dirce supposes this Oracle regards her; and it is certain, that she believes she is the only remaining branch of Laius. But it is not clear, that the Oracle considers her as more than the collateral branch. This, however, is the grand difficulty of the intrigue. When Dirce hears the Oracle by which she supposes herself to be meant, her pride becomes fortitude, and produces those noble sentiments so worthy of Corneille. She begins thus, in speaking of Oedipus and Aemon:

“ Peut-être craignent-ils que mon cœur révolté

“ Ne leur refuse un sang qu'ils n'ont pas mérité,” &c. *

Nothing can be more beautiful, or would have greater strength, if it was not built upon a ruinous foundation. The appearance of Theseus immediately afterwards would make a fine situation, if all this was not foreign to the subject, and had not a romantic air. Can these verses be thought proper in the mouth of Theseus?

“ Périr l'univers pourvu que Dirce vive!

“ Périr le jour même avant qu'elle s'en prive!

“ Que m'importe la peste ou le salut de tous?

“ Ai-je rien à sauver, rien à perdre que vous?”

ACT THE THIRD.

In the beginning of this act Dirce sighs out some very lively stanzas, which are no longer seasonable, and which ought surely not to have been introduced there, so great is the impropriety of them. She asks Jocasta, who interrupts her in her reverie, if all the preparations for the sacrifice are ready. The queen tells her, that the people will not be preserved at so high a price, and that they have resolved to consult the Gods again: that Oedipus espe-

* Scene the third, act the second.

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cially cannot consent to the death of so great a princess; and, lastly, that the Oracle is too doubtful to be implicitly obeyed, and that she ought to live, if not for her, at least for Theseus. Jocasta argues like a mother. But Dirce not only preserves the haughtiness of her character, but, in some degree, forgetting that she is the daughter of Jocasta, and, still more, the gratitude she owes to a mother, who, contrary to the maxims of policy, permits her to love Theseus, she carries her pride so far as to lay aside all reverence and respect, and, from this tenderness expressed by her mother, takes an opportunity to reproach her with her marrying Oedipus. It would be very difficult to excuse this scene, notwithstanding what Corneille says in its defence. He tells us, he is not obliged to make his characters perfect; and, besides, Dirce had reason to consider Jocasta as a mother who had usurped her throne by her marriage with Oedipus, and yet she does not fail to solicit her pardon in these terms:

“ Pardonnez cependant à cette humeur hautaine.

“ Je veux parler en fille & je m'explique en reine.

“ Vous qui l'êtes encor, vous sçavez ce que c'est,” &c.

The same haughtiness animates the following scene between Oedipus and Dirce. For it is always Dirce who puts the stage into motion, and Oedipus seems to be only the second person in the piece. He brings the princess a new argument against her obstinate resolution to die, and tells her he has great cause to believe, that she is not the victim the Gods demand. Dirce retires, to leave the king at liberty to explain this enigma to the queen; which consists in his having learned, by some confused reports, and even from Tiresias, that the son of Laius, who was believed to be dead, is alive, and in the palace. There is great art in this contrivance. But we do not find in it the same connexion as in Sophocles. For this declaration of Tiresias produces nothing; and the subject of the most part of the scenes have very little relation to the principal design. The queen, as has been agreed between her and Oedipus, is going to meet Phorbas, but is stopped by Theseus; who declares to her, that he, and not Dirce, is the victim that must be offered up to appease the Gods; in a word, that he is the son of Laius. How must Jocasta be astonished! Nevertheless, generous as he is, he will not take upon himself the guilt of Laius's murder. It is plain, this is a lover's stratagem to save his mistress; and Jocasta, when recovered from her first sur-

surprise, understands it so. But Theseus persists in his assertion, and even refers to Phorbas for the truth of it. However, this artifice, which favours a little of romance, opens a fine field, and gives occasion for one of the most beautiful scenes in the whole piece.

ACT THE FOURTH.

The stratagem of Theseus, who endeavours to pass for the son of Laius, and the arrival of Phorbas, make the whole business of the fourth act. It begins with a very refined conversation between Theseus and his mistress. She is rejoiced to find herself restored to Theseus; but, if he is proved to be her brother, she is deprived both of the glory of dying for her country, and the pleasure of living for him. The brother and the lover, tenderness and ambition, form here one of those delicate struggles so industriously sought for by Corneille. But, at length, Theseus takes off the mask, and confesses his stratagem, so much the more readily, as he believed Dirce to be secure ever since he had learned, that Tiresias and Phorbas had both agreed in declaring that a son of Laius was still alive. But this double contrivance, namely, the stratagem of Theseus, and the declaration made by Tiresias, together with that of the Oracle, by which Dirce seems to be the victim demanded by the Gods, are they as natural as they are ingenious? Are they equal to the simple unravelling of a single circumstance invented by Sophocles? Do we not discover the same difference between them, as between a romance and a history, a beautiful landscape and a garden laid out with great art? One is a very simple machine, the other extremely complicated.

The king of Athens, after having undeceived Dirce, keeps Jocasta in the same state of doubt and uncertainty into which he had thrown her. She has seen Phorbas, and would persuade Theseus to avoid this man, who may possibly have it in his power to prove him guilty of Laius's murder. Her arguments are fruitless. Theseus resolves to see him, and Phorbas appears. He does not in the king of Athens acknowledge the murderer of Laius, and clears him of the crime; but he confesses, that he knows the assassin, and that he lives in an elevated rank. He even exhorts Theseus, if he is really the son of Laius, to punish him: a beautiful suspension; but not very probable. For if Phorbas knows, that it was Oedipus who murdered Laius (as it is supposed he does), why did he not declare it sooner, or why not be silent
alto-

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altogether, since he is sure the secret is known to no other person? This fault set aside, it must be confessed that the poet forces him, by a very artful management, to speak. For Oedipus by his questions expects to convict Phorbas of having been one of the robbers who murdered Laius, and thus proves himself to be the assassin. A circumstance very happily imagined, if it was easy to believe that Oedipus, when he killed the king, supposed he had killed a robber. This tragedy is deficient in probability from beginning to end; but this fault is concealed by a thousand beauties.

Behold Oedipus then convicted of having murdered Laius, whom he does not yet know to have been his father. This discovery will make the business of the fifth act. The fourth is concluded with the threats of Theseus, threats which are surely very unseasonable, and with a scene between Oedipus and Jocasta, the absurdity of which is very striking. For since Jocasta knows, that the murder of Laius is attributed by an Oracle to her son, when she finds Oedipus is the murderer, has she not reason to suspect, that he is this son? She who believed Theseus might be him; she who has just been informed, that this son is still alive, and in the palace? To palliate this improbability Corneille puts these words in the mouth of Jocasta;

“ Oracles décevans, qu’osiez-vous me prédire !
 “ Si sur notre avenir nos Dieux ont quelque empire,
 “ Quelle indigne pitié divise leur courroux ;
 “ Ce qu’elle épargne au fils retombe sur l’époux,
 “ Et comme si leur haine impuissante ou timide,
 “ N’osoit le faire ensemble inceste & parricide,
 “ Elle partage à deux un sort si peu commun,
 “ Afin de me donner deux coupables pour un.”

To which Oedipus answers :

“ O partage inégal de ce courroux céleste !
 “ Je suis le parricide, & ce fils de l’inceste,” &c.

Certainly, instead of running into this subtilty of reasoning, they had both cause for strange inquietudes concerning their condition.

ACT THE FIFTH.

The murmurs of the people, or rather the apparent injustice of possessing the bed and throne of a man whom he had killed, determined Oedipus to return to Corinth. However, he will depart
 like

THE OEDIPUS OF CORNEILLE. 95

like a king : and, to be convinced whether Theseus, Dirce, and Phorbas have not engaged in a conspiracy against him, he has an interview with them, and penetrates into their most hidden thoughts : for he still preserves the character of a politician. Iphicrates now comes from Corinth, to tell him, or rather to give him a circumstantial detail of the death of Polybus, which he knows already in general. To this piece of news he adds another, still more important, namely, that the king of Corinth, in his last moments, had restored the crown to the lawful heir, and that Oedipus was not the son of that prince,

“ Je ne suis point son fils ! hé qui suis-je ? ”

Says Oedipus. Iphicrates replies, that he knows not whose son he is ; but that he received him, when an infant, from the hands of a Theban upon mount Citheron. Every thing now depends upon Phorbas being confronted with Iphicrates. Oedipus begins to suspect his destiny : and it is time he should.

“ Dieux seroit-il possible ? approchez-vous, Phorbas. ”

Phorbas obeys ; and the whole mystery is discovered. Your mistaken prudence, says the king to them.

“ ---- Fait voir en moi par un mélange infâme

“ Le frere de mes fils, & le fils de ma femme.

“ Le Ciel l'avoit prédit ; vous avez achevé,

“ Et vous avez tout fait quand vous m'avez sauvé. ”

These reproaches, in the consternation Oedipus must be supposed to be, are not natural. Sophocles makes him retire the moment he knows himself ; and this is very judicious : whereas in Corneille this unhappy prince, who ought to be thunder-struck with what he had heard, remains a long time afterwards upon the stage. And for what ? To regulate a love affair. Even Dirce and Theseus, instead of being seized with that horror which the knowledge of Oedipus must necessarily inspire, amuse themselves with consoling him upon the most trifling motives imaginable. They tell him, that the Oracle speaks only of the blood of Laius in general : and hence Dirce would persuade Oedipus, that in the sacrifice to be made the next day, Heaven might perhaps spare the king, and turn all its wrath upon her.

“ L'intérêt des Thébains & de votre famille.

“ Tournera son courroux sur l'orgueil d'une fille,

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" Qui n'a rein que l'etat doit confiderer,
 " Et qui contre son roi n'a fait que murmurer."

Oedipus is even refolved to wait for what this day may produce; fully perfuaded, that the Gods will not punifh him for the injuf-
 tice of their own decrees. For he does not think it neceffary to
 be before-hand with the Gods: becaufe his own heart acquits
 him of intentional guilt. This indeed is not in the genius of any
 age. Oedipus is neither a Greek nor a Frenchman; and all the
 perfons in the drama are a kind of people that refemble no other.

After the king is withdrawn, we have a relation of the deaths
 of Jocasta and Phorbas: which is alfo fpoiled by the queen's foli-
 citude in her laft moments for the loves of Thefeus and Dirce.
 Was this a time for fuch cares? But fo it is, that every thing
 muft be made fufervient to this epifode, and the adventure of
 Jocasta and Oedipus muft be managed as that will admit.

THE

THE
O E D I P U S
OF

M. ORSATTO GIUSTINIANO.

THE author having given us this piece only as a translation from Sophocles, I shall say nothing more of it, than that it is a very fine one. The Italian language being softer than ours, and admitting more easily the graces and elegancies of the Greek, it is not surprising, that the Italians, who have no good tragedies of their own, should have a taste for those which their best writers have translated from the Greek; and that, encouraged by their success, they should translate almost all of them. The Oedipus of the noble Venetian Orsatto Giustiniano was acted with great magnificence at Vicenza, by the academicians, in the year 1585, and printed at Venice the same year.

VOL. I.

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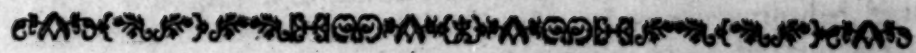
ELECTRA:

OF THE

MORRIS TO CHRISTIANITY

The author having given in this piece only a translation from the original, I shall be obliged to those who are very desirous of the original, to send him a copy of the same. The author has been very much assisted in this work, and particularly in the translation, by the assistance of the Rev. Mr. [Name], who has been very kind to him in every way, and has been a great help to him in every way. The author has been very much assisted in this work, and particularly in the translation, by the assistance of the Rev. Mr. [Name], who has been very kind to him in every way, and has been a great help to him in every way. The author has been very much assisted in this work, and particularly in the translation, by the assistance of the Rev. Mr. [Name], who has been very kind to him in every way, and has been a great help to him in every way.

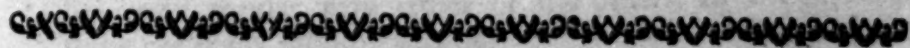
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ELECTRA:

A

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.



THE

OF

THE

OF

ARTS:

TRAGEDY OF SOCRATES

AND

OF

The S U B J E C T

A G A M E M N O N, king of Mycene and Argos, having been chosen general of the Greek army in the expedition against Troy, was obliged to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, in compliance with the superstition of the Greeks, who were persuaded, that it was at this price alone a favourable wind could be purchased. Clytemnestra, the wife of Agamemnon, makes use of this pretence to get rid of a husband whom her lover had rendered hateful to her. This lover is Ægisthus, the son of Thyestes, and cousin-germain to Agamemnon, who is the son of Atreus, the brother of Thyestes. This nearness of blood, instead of withholding Ægisthus from any treasonable attempts, only animates him the more to usurp the throne of him whose bed he had dishonoured. When Agamemnon returned from Troy, Clytemnestra and her lover concealed their intended parricide under an affectionate behaviour. But on his coming out of the bath threw a robe over him, which had been designedly made close at the top: and while he was intangled in it, they fell upon him, and murdered him. All that Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon, could do on this melancholly occasion, was to preserve the young Orestes, her brother, that he might one day be the avenger of her father. Electra suffered a long time under the cruelty of her tyrants: but at length, twenty years after the murder of Agamemnon, Orestes suddenly appears again, and kills his mother and the usurper.

This subject has employed the pens of three Greek poets. In the analysis which I shall give of the *Electras* of Æschylus and Euripides, we shall see in what manner they have treated it. But I judged it necessary to give the whole tragedy of Sophocles, as being more regular than either of the others, in which however there are many sublime beauties.

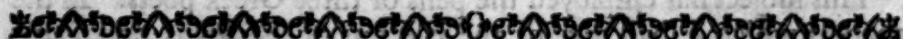
P E R S O N S



PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

- ÆGISTHUS**, king of Mycene, cousin of Agamemnon.
CLYTEMNESTRA, the wife of Ægisthus.
ORESTES, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
ELECTRA, sister of Orestes.
CRYSOTHEMIS, sister of Electra and Orestes.
The GOVERNOR of Orestes.
PYLADES, friend of Orestes.
Train.
CHORUS, composed of the principal Ladies of Mycene.

The **SCENE** is, before the palace of Ægisthus at Mycene.



ELECTRA:

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.

ACT the FIRST.

SCENE the FIRST.

ORESTES, his GOVERNOR, and PYLADES.

GOVERNOR.

ILLUSTRIOUS branch of that great monarch who led the Grecian army against Troy, oh son of Agamemnon, thou art permitted then to behold once more the object of thy wishes. On the right * hand thou seest the ancient city of Argos, the wood of the daughter of Inachus †, and the Lyceum ‡, consecrated to Apollo. On the left thou behold'st the celebrated temple of Juno. The city thou art come to is Mycene ||; and this palace, the scene of so many murders, is the palace of the descendants of Pelops §. It was I, my dear prince, who, after the fatal death

* They saw on the right hand the city of Argos, one of the most ancient of the eastern Peloponnesus. They came to it by the road of Corinth.

† It was there that Io was transformed into a heifer, and guarded by Argos with his hundred eyes.

‡ A place dedicated to Apollo, the killer of snakes.

|| A neighbouring city to Argos, and in the tragedies of the Greeks often confounded with it, because Agamemnon was the first king of both, and kept his court there.

§ He gave his name to the Peloponnesus.

of thy father, received thee from the hands of thy sister. I stole thee from the cruel fate with which thou wert threatened ——— to me the care of thy infancy was confided, and thou art now arrived to an age which enables thee to revenge thy father. The day for this revenge is come, Orestes; and thou, his faithful friend, thou, generous Pylades, behold that day in which our schemes must all be executed. Let us not waste the flying moments in discourse. Already the rising sun reanimates the birds; the air is filled with their songs. Night with the stars is vanished. Let us not wait till the inhabitants of this palace appear. We have now reached that point, when not to deliberate, but to act is necessary.

O R E S T E S.

Oh! thou, who of all those faithful friends that have followed my fortunes, art dearest to my heart; how welcome to me are these proofs of thy affection. Thou, like a generous courser, whose vigour old age cannot abate, art ever the first to animate me by thy councils and example. Hear then my sentiments, and, if I am wrong, reprove me.

Fully determined to revenge the murder of my father, I had recourse, thou knowest, to the Oracle of Delphos. "Take vengeance on the murderers," said the God: "but do it privately." Let art and secrecy be to you instead of arms and forces." Such was the answer of Apollo. Go then [*To his Governor.*] under the auspices of this Oracle; seize the fortunate moment when it offers itself; gain access into this palace. Observe what passes there, and return to us with thy intelligence. Thy advanced age, and the equipage thou appearest in, will, doubtless, prevent thy being known, or suspected. Say, that thou art a native of Phocis*, sent by a friend of theirs at Panope†, to bring them the news of Orestes's death. Assure them, even with oaths, that he fell from his chariot in the Pythian‡ games. This is thy part

* Phocis, a country to the north of Boeotia, towards the gulph of Corinth.

† A city near Delphos.

‡ "The poet should take care not to introduce any thing into his subject which is improbable: and, if this cannot be wholly avoided, the improbability must either precede or follow the action, as in Oedipus, where this prince is supposed

"to be ignorant of the manner of Laius's death. But in the Electra an improbability is found in the very body of the action, where news is brought of the death of Orestes at the Pythian games," &c. Aristotle's poetics, chap. 25.

M. Dacier says, that Aristotle is shocked here at this anachronism of the Pythian games, which were not instituted till five hundred years

part. As for us, after we have poured libations, and strewed our hair *, upon my father's tomb, as Apollo has commanded us, we will return hither. You know where we have hid the brazen urn in the midst of the thicket. We will go seek it, and bring it with us, as an authentic testimony of my death. Our barbarous assassins shall enjoy the delusive pleasure of believing me reduced to ashes. But they shall pay dearly for this cruel satisfaction. † For, after all, what do I suffer by being supposed dead? I live, and I shall live with glory. Can an artifice so useful be a fatal preface? How many wise men have slighted these idle superstitions? They have been supposed dead, and have appeared again with more lustre than before. Thus will it happen to me. Secure from danger by this report, I shall present myself before my enemies like a bright star, which dazzles the eye to gaze on. Receive me then my ever-loved native land; ye tutelary Gods direct my enterprise; and oh! thou palace of my ancestors, which by the order of the Gods I come to purify from those horrors, those abominations which have stained it, suffer me not to return disappointed, and covered with confusion. Assist me to regain my throne, that I may restore thee to thy former lustre. ---- And now do thou, oh reverend old man, perform thy duty. Pylades and I will not neglect ours. Let us part: a favourable opportunity offers itself; it is that which decides all, let us not lose it.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

O R E S T E S, P Y L A D E S, the G O V E R N O R.

E L E C T R A within the palace.

Ah me, unhappy!

years after the death of Orestes. 'Tis certain, that those who carry this institution the farthest back, fix it in the forty-eighth Olympiad. But we have no reason to imagine, that the games in question, before their pompous celebration, had not their beginning from Apollo himself, immediately after he had destroyed the serpent Python. Nor is it less probable, that, if this last opinion had not been received among the Greeks, Sophocles would have thought of feigning that Orestes was killed at these games; especially when he might

have so easily avoided this anachronism. If this is allowed, Aristotle only finds fault with Sophocles for introducing a person relating a fact to Clytemnestra, as unknown, when she might so easily have discovered by others, whether it was true or false; especially as it regarded Orestes, of whom she lived in perpetual apprehension.

* A custom among the Greeks, which is often mentioned in their tragedies.

† A remainder of superstition which Orestes would vain conquer.

V O L. I.

P E L E C T R A.

G O V E R N O R.

Hark! sure I hear some slave complaining in the palace.

O R E S T E S.

Perhaps it is the unfortunate Electra. Shall we not stay a moment, to know if it be really her.

G O V E R N O R.

No, prince; let nothing stop us now: we must execute the orders of the God who guides us, without delay. Begin, by offering libations due to the shade of Agamemnon. Victory will be the reward of this pious duty.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

E L E C T R A alone.

Oh! thou pure light of heaven, which encompasses this globe: the constant witness of my complaints, oft hast thou beheld me striking this bleeding bosom; but, alas! thou seest only the remainder of my agonizing nights. Wrapt in the shades of darkness, my couch, my melancholly couch, the only confidant of my woes, sees my tears flow incessant for the horrid fate of a loved father. The God of war spared him in battle: but his wife and the treacherous Egisthus, more inhuman than Mars, murdered their king: he fell under their repeated blows, as an oak falls under the stroke of the wood-cleaver's ax; and while a father underwent this horrid fate, I was the only one who paid him the tribute of my tears. Yes, I will weep for him as long as the sun and stars shall shine on me. Like Philomel*, deprived of her children, I will make this palace resound with my lamentations; nor will I be restrained by my tyrants from making my sorrows known. Ye gloomy regions of the dead, where Pluto reigns, oh! Mercury, by whom the souls of mortals are conducted to the shades of hell; oh! † Goddess of dreadful imprecations; and

* The daughter of Pandion, and sister of Progne, the wife of Tereus. In this and the following scene, the poet supposes, that it was Progne who was changed into a nightingale. For it was Progne, and not Philomela, who killed her son, and served him up to the table of Tereus, in revenge

for the injury he had done her sister. See Ovid's Metam. Eschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, suppose, that it was Progne who was changed into a nightingale.

† Nemesis.

you, oh! daughters of the Gods, tremendous Euménides, you who behold murder and adultery with horror, fly, oh fly to my assistance! Deign at least to restore to me my brother, my Orestes. For thus alone, without comfort or support, I can no longer bear the weight of my misfortunes.

SCENE the FOURTH.

ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Oh! daughter of a most unnatural mother, unhappy Electra, still wilt thou languish thus in grief? Wilt thou never cease to weep for the fate of a father, betrayed by an impious wife and an unworthy rival? ----- Oh! if we may be allowed to form such wishes, may the authors of this parricide perish.

ELECTRA.

You come, my dear companions, to console me in my misfortunes. Your tenderness, your compassion, I know. I know also all that you can say. These cares are fruitless. For oh! I weep, and I will ever weep for my unhappy father. Alas! if you value my friendship, by that friendship I conjure you leave me to my sorrows, leave me to consume away in solitary grief.

CHORUS.

Not all thy tears and prayers can recal thy father from those dark shores whence none return*. Why then dost thou vainly seek a remedy for evils which admit of none? Why dost thou thus abandon thyself to a sorrow which thou hast not strength to support? Moderate it, princess, in time; for by indulgence it will still increase, and thou at length wilt be the victim of it.

ELECTRA.

Oh vain, vain arguments! Is it possible to forget the murder of those to whom we owe our life? Philomel teaches me to weep. She who warns us of returning light, incessantly repeating to the

* I have ventured to make a slight transposition here, which does not alter the sense, and which makes it in my opinion more graceful in the French.

woods the name of Itys, her beloved Itys. Oh happy Niobe *! transformed to marble, thou wilt weep for ever. To Electra thy destiny seems more desirable than that of the Gods.

C H O R U S.

Remember, princess, thou art not the only one who hast cause to be afflicted. Wilt thou then be the only one who sink'st under affliction? Why dost thou not follow the example of those who are bound to thee by the ties of blood? Observe how Chrysothemis, † Iphianassa, Orestes, the children of Agamemnon as well as thee, support their affliction.

E L E C T R A.

Happy Orestes! Mycene will one day behold him return in triumph: yes, friends, Jupiter will bring him back. It is he whom I continually expect, as my only resource. Alone, without a husband, without friends, abandoned to despair, and ever bathed in tears, I drag a miserable life, while Orestes, the calm Orestes, forgets my sorrows and his own, forgets the obligations he owes me; neglects my letters. With how many delusive answers has he trifled with my impatience! If I am to believe him, he wishes with ardour to come to Mycene; yet in spite of these ardent wishes he appears not.

C H O R U S.

Sink not thus under thy affliction, princess. Recal thy courage, thy fortitude. It is a God who revenges injured innocence. Jupiter, from the highest heaven, sees all and governs all. Confide in him, and think less of grief than vengeance. The time will come when thy enemies shall be punished. Time is a God, whose course cannot be stayed. Rely with confidence upon the return of Orestes ‡, and upon the immediate assistance of the sovereign of the shades.

E L E C T R A.

Mean time my life fleets away like a dream; my youth is wasted

* Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes. Her seven sons and seven daughters were slain by Apollo. The poets feign that she was changed into marble.

† This is not the Iphigenia who was sacrificed. Euripides, speaking of the children of Clytemnestra, mentions only Ores-

tes, Iphigenia, and Electra. He takes no notice of the others; namely, Iphianassa and Chrysothemis.

‡ In the original, "Orestes who was educated at Crissa, a city situated upon the shore of Phocis." Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king of it.

in anxious expectation. ---- Delusive hope ! I cannot even preserve the sad remains of it. Deprived of parents, of protectors ; a slave in the palace of my ancestors ; debased in this vile habit, unworthy of my birth ; unwillingly I receive that little pittance which supports a miserable life, and grief consumes me.

C H O R U S.

Ah ! how dearly didst thou purchase the glad news of Agamemnon's return ! ---- Return how fatal ! Oh horrid night ! in which he beheld his bed profaned, and was himself made the victim of an impious passion. Love executed what artifice had contrived. Adultry was the prelude and the minister of murder.

E L E C T R A.

Oh day ! the blackest sure that ever rose upon my miserable fate. Oh night abhorred ! Oh execrable feast ! where my loved father fell by the hands of two furies. Alas ! the wounds with which they pierced the unhappy father's breast were felt by his distracted daughter. Oh ! sovereign of the Gods, great Jupiter, suffer not these treacherous assassins to enjoy the wealth and honours of him whom they have murdered ; but pour the severest calamities upon them.

C H O R U S.

Be cautious, princess, how thou repeat'st these imprecations. Hast thou forgot the miseries they have brought upon thee ? Thy ceaseless complaints and reproaches have been already productive of too many quarrels, and thou hast severely felt the effects of them. Surely it is not prudent to irritate injustice armed with power.

E L E C T R A.

Misfortunes like mine admit not the restraints of prudence. I know my rage, my madness, my despair : I confess them all ; but never, never will I set bounds to this despair. For oh ! my dear companions, let me ask you in my turn, Is it wise in you to offer me consolations in such unequalled woes ? Alas ! can I listen to the voice of comfort ? Leave me, again I beg you leave me to my complainings ; for I will still complain. My grief shall be boundless, my despair unmeasurable.

C H O R U S.

It is our tenderness for thee that forces us to speak. Like
a fond

a fond mother *, we tremble to see thee so fatally indulge thy griefs.

E L E C T R A.

† Yet tell me, I conjure you, can I set bounds to my sorrows, when there are none to my misfortunes? Can I with honour forget the murder of so dear a father? How hard must be that heart from whence so melancholly, so tender a remembrance can be effaced! It is not through affectation, or to comply with the laws of decency, that I thus abandon myself to my affliction. I expect no praises from the dead. Were my destiny joined to that of the most tender husband, yet never, never would I forget to pay that tribute of tears which I owe to a murdered father. For oh! if his dear ashes are neglected, if his indignant shade be unhonoured, well might you say, that there is no filial piety remaining in the world.

C H O R U S.

Princess, it is for our own interest, as well as thine, that we endeavour to console thee. Yet, if our arguments appear unjust, speak, we are ready to be reproved.

E L E C T R A.

I will acknowledge then, my dear companions, that I blush for my weakness. But oh! 'tis nature still, and I am unable to resist it. Every day, instead of lessening, brings an increase to my misfortunes. The most dreadful of all I suffer from the hand of a mother ---- I dwell in the palace of my ancestors. Ah! rather say in the palace of my father's butchers: I am their slave; and it is from these tyrants that I receive that nourishment which is necessary to prolong a wretched life. What are my pangs, do you imagine, when I see Egisthus seated on my father's throne, and clad in his robes, sacrifice to the household Gods, in the very palace where the barbarian murdered him: but oh! my grief rises to madness when I behold him in the bed of my detested mother, if I ought still to call by that name, the woman who shares her bed with the assassin of her husband! Impious as she is, she fears not the avenging Furies. She despises the Gods, and

* The word *mother* (as M. Dacier judiciously remarks) shews, that the Chorus was composed of matrons, and not of virgins.

† This answer of Electra's is extremely difficult to be understood in the Greek. I believe I have got the sense. The learned will judge whether I am mistaken.

mocks at their anger. On each returning year, the day that saw my father's murder is distinguished with rejoicings by his inhuman wife. She leads up solemn dances, and even dares to sacrifice to the protecting Gods. I see these abominations, and tears are my only resource. Wildly I wander through the palace. What do I not suffer when they celebrate those execrable feasts, which are called the feasts of * Agamemnon? I weep. This is all I can do. ---- But I must conceal my tears: for I am not permitted the poor relief of indulging my sorrow in public. Soon would the usual invectives of Clytemnestra thunder in my ears. "Thou miserable object of the anger of the Gods," she says, "the death of Agamemnon affects none but thee: no mortal weeps for him here but thyself. May'st thou consume away with thy sorrow: may the infernal Deities put no other period but death to thy lamentations!" 'Tis thus she rages; but when any report of the speedy return of Orestes reaches her ears, then she hastens to me, and loads me with her reproaches. "Art not thou the only cause of my distress?" she cries. "Is not this thy work? Yes, it was thou, wretch! who didst steal him from me, to convey him privately to another country: but I know how to punish thee!" While she thus vents her fury, her unworthy husband, that effeminate, that infamous wretch, that coward, who dares not even act his villainy but by the assistance of women, stands close beside her, to animate her still more against me. Mean time I wait for my Orestes: I languish in vain expectation: his fatal delay destroys all my hopes. In such a cruel situation, my dear companions, how can I be moderate! Oh! it is impossible not to exclaim even against heaven itself. ----

C H O R U S.

But, princess, whilst thou thus indulgest thyself in complaints, say, we beseech thee, is Egisthus in the palace?

E L E C T R A.

Alas! think you if he were there I durst appear in this place? He is at Mycene.

C H O R U S.

If so our apprehensions are removed. We are at liberty to intreat thy confidence, and to speak freely to thee.

* An insulting illusion to the supper at which they killed Agamemnon.

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

Constrain yourselves no longer. He is absent.

C H O R U S.

Hast thou had any news of Orestes? Is he to come, or not?

E L E C T R A.

Come! Alas, he says so. He promises much: but these promises he thinks not of fulfilling.

C H O R U S.

Is it surprising, that, when a great affair is to be undertaken, deliberation should be thought necessary?

E L E C T R A.

Did I, when his life was in danger, deliberate whether I ought to save him?

C H O R U S.

Take courage, princess. Orestes cannot be ungenerous: he will never forget his friends.

E L E C T R A.

I must believe so, or I should cease to live.

C H O R U S.

Oh Gods! let us be silent; thy sister, Crysothemis, appears. She bears offerings, such as are usually devoted to the dead.

S C E N E the F I F T H.

CRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

What dost thou mean, sister, by making the entrance to this palace resound with thy cries? Has not time yet been able to assuage thy griefs? Has it not taught thee to abandon thyself no longer to fruitless complaints? I am no less sensible of our common misfortunes than thou art: I feel the whole weight of my affliction, and that I am not in a condition to let our tyrants know my sentiments of their cruelty; but in the circumstances to which they have reduced me, I have thought it my duty to accommodate myself to my fortune, and not to tempt that vengeance which may be fatal to me. Do thou, my dear Electra,
endea-

endeavour to act as I do. Not but thy conduct may perhaps be more justifiable than mine; but if freedom has any charms for us, it is necessary to yield, and not vainly resist our sovereigns.

E L E C T R A.

Is it the daughter of Agamemnon whom I hear? Oh Gods, what baseness! The daughter of Agamemnon forgets her father; and for whom? For Clytemnestra. For the arguments thou makest use of to calm my griefs, are lessons she hath taught thee. Own, Crysothemis, that thou want'st tenderness for a father; or if thou still entertain'st any, thou meanly suppresses it, in compliance with our foes. Thou tell'st me, "that if thou hadst power equal to thy will, they should know thy sentiments." Thus far thy hatred goes: yet thou beholdest me languishing for vengeance; and, instead of assisting, thou endeavourest to disarm my resentment, and thus add weakness to misfortune. Tell me then, or deign to hear from me; what advantage can I draw from thy counsel? What shall I gain by moderating my grief? I live, sister, I live wretched indeed; but I have some consolation in tormenting them by the tears I shed for my dear murdered father. As for thee, who boastest of hating the parricides, it is in words that thou hatest them, and thou art really in their interests. Although they had offered me these splendid gifts, of which thou art so vain, I should not have been base enough to disguise my sentiments. No: I envy not thy magnificent feasts; thy table delicately served. All this affects not me. My nourishment is grief, and ceaseless tears. Let them leave me these, and it is sufficient. The honours conferred upon thee soothe not me: nor oughtest thou to be dazzled by them. Oh! Crysothemis, thou who may'st be called a daughter of the best of fathers, wilt thou renounce that title to repeat the name of mother? Go, cruel, unnatural, as thou art. Well do'st thou deserve these epithets, since thou can'st betray the memory of a father who ought to be so dear to thee.

C H O R U S.

Princess, we conjure thee, in the name of the Gods, calm these transports. Your mutual counsels might be useful, if you would listen to each other.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Constrain her not. I have long been used to her invectives: nor would I now have drawn them upon myself, but that I have

E L E C T R A.

had notice of a horrible misfortune which threatens her, and which will probably put an end to these free complainings.

E L E C T R A.

What is this horrible misfortune? Speak. What miseries can'st thou inform me of, more insupportable than these I suffer now?

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Know then, that unless thou art more moderate in thy sorrows, and give some truce to thy perpetual complaints, they have resolved to send thee to a place where thou wilt be secluded from the light of heaven. They will bury thee in a tower, where thou mayst have sufficient leisure to lament thy misfortunes. Think of this, sister; profit by my advice, ere it be too late, and do not hereafter impute thy calamities to me.

E L E C T R A.

This then is their last resolution.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

It is; and when Egisthus returns they will execute it.

E L E C T R A.

Soon, soon may he return then.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Alas! unhappy sister, what is it thou wishest?

E L E C T R A.

That Egisthus may soon return, if such be their design.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

How! when his return will be so fatal to thee, can'st thou wish it? Strange frenzy!

E L E C T R A.

I shall then be delivered from the sight of them and thee.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Ah! cruel Electra, hast thou then abandoned all care of thy life?

E L E C T R A.

I have indeed great reason to boast of the sweetness of my life.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

It might be less unhappy, if thou would'st yield to prudent counsels.

E L E C -

ELECTRA.

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ELECTRA.

Counsel me not to betray my filial tenderness.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

No: but submit only to present conjunctures, and to sovereign power.

ELECTRA.

What! kneel to my tyrants. ---- Away, this is not my character.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Is it wise to abandon one's self to despair, and perish voluntarily?

ELECTRA.

Yes, I will perish, if it must be so, and in my death revenge a murdered father.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Believe me, sister, the shade of Agamemnon will readily forgive thee for a necessary submission.

ELECTRA.

None but base minds can relish such counsels.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

You are determined then not to follow them.

ELECTRA.

Preserve me, Gods, from even listening to them.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Farewel then; I will go and execute my orders.

ELECTRA.

May I know, whither thou art going with those libations?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

To Agamemnon's tomb, by the command of Clytemnestra.

ELECTRA.

To the tomb of Agamemnon! and by Clytemnestra's command! What! the man whom she hated, whom ----

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Go on: whom she murdered with her own hands; so thou would'st say.

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

But why these rites? To what are they owing?

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

* Some nocturnal terrors, by what I have heard.

E L E C T R A.

Oh Gods of my fathers, be propitious to me this day!

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

What hope do'st thou conceive from this, Electra?

E L E C T R A.

Tell me her dream, and thou shalt know.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

But little of it has come to my knowledge.

E L E C T R A.

Tell me that little. Often the slightest circumstance is sufficient to raise or to depress our hope.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Clytemnestra, it is reported, has seen this night thy father and mine, ascending from the regions of the dead. The sceptre which passed from his hands into those of Egisthus, Agamemnon planted in this palace, and suddenly a flourishing branch grew out of it, which overshadowed all Mycene. I learnt this from a person who heard her relate her dream to the sun†. This is all I can acquaint thee with. And, terrified by her vision, she has sent me to the tomb of her husband. Hear me then I conjure thee, sister; by the Gods of our ancestors, do not ruin thyself by thy imprudent tenderness. For, if thou rejectest my counsels now, thou wilt hereafter, in spite of thyself, wish thou hadst followed them, when perhaps it may be too late.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, Crysothemis, I implore thee, do not pollute the tomb of my father by these infamous libations. What horror, what impiety, to carry him gifts from his inhuman wife! Oh! rather

* These and the following lines shew the superstition of those times. At present such situations would not be allowed.

† It was a custom among the ancients to relate their dreams to the sun, by that means to turn aside the misfortunes with which they were threatened.

scatter them in the air, or bury them deep in the earth; let not these profane offerings approach the injured Agamemnon. Reserve these treasures for her, when the course of her destiny shall be ended. Oh woman, shameless beyond example! to offer these detested presents to a husband whom she murdered. Will my father, think'st thou, from the depth of his sepulchre, behold with pleasure these sacrifices, presented by the hand that barbarously stabbed him? Does she hope to wash away her crime, by pouring libations on the wounds she has made? And dost thou, Crysothemis, imagine that these offerings can expiate the murder she committed? Ah! no, it is impossible. Leave these barren gifts, and offer others, more acceptable. Cut off those curling locks: add them to mine. Alas! few of mine remain: I have already sacrificed them. Yet even these few I will offer: their number will shew the excess of my grief. This will be a present worthy of Agamemnon. Go, bear it to him. ----- Yet stay, here is my girdle: it is not rich indeed; but it will serve as a fillet. Haste, and with these welcome gifts prostrate thyself before the sacred tomb of our father. Conjure him to rise from the earth, and, armed in our defence, fall on our merciless enemies. Conjure him at least to send his son, the sad remains of his blood, to our relief. Let him shew our tyrants that he lives; lives to take vengeance on them, that henceforwards Agamemnon may receive from us more magnificent presents. For, not to yield to thee in mutual confidence, Crysothemis, I know from whence this dream proceeds that alarms Clytemnestra thus. Our father looks with compassion on our sufferings. 'Tis to this care he still takes of us, that I attribute these fatal presages which terrify Clytemnestra. Let us go then, sister, we will now unite: thou shalt assist me; I will aid thee: let us act in concert for the best of men, for thy father and for mine.

C H O R U S.

The tenderest piety breathes in these sentiments: it is thy duty, young princess, to comply.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

I will: my resolution is taken. Upon an occasion so just we cannot think differently. I go to perform what she requires; but I conjure you all in the name of the Gods keep the secret inviolably. Too well I know what this bold action would cost me, should it reach the ears of Clytemnestra.

FIRST

FIRST INTERLUDE.

The CHORUS, with ELECTRA, who is silent.

CHORUS.

STROPHE. If I may trust the secret warnings of my soul, the Goddess Nemesis approaches. She comes with hasty pace, and brings with her the punishment due to murder. Yes, my dear daughter, she appears; my hopes deceive me not: they are founded on the favourable dream we have so lately heard. The king of the Greeks, thy father, who was so cruelly massacred, will not forget their crime; and the instrument of his death, that horrid ax, which served their fury, cries out for vengeance on them.

ANTISTROPHE. She comes, the restless Fury, the Goddess with a hundred feet and hundred eyes, wrapt in thick clouds, she comes to punish the execrable marriage to which parricide was the prelude. These horrors all assure me, that the dream of Clytemnestra was not sent in vain; its threats will fall upon the authors and accomplices of guilt. For who henceforward will rely on dreams and oracles if this nocturnal phantom be not favourable to thy wishes?

EPODE. Alas! how fatal has the chariot race of Pelops been to this land! Ever since that unhappy day when Myrtil * was thrown into the sea, the wretched family of the Pelops have been overwhelmed with misfortunes.

* Myrtil was the coachman of Oenomaus. This prince was the father of Hippodamia. He had been warned by an oracle, to beware of a son-in-law; therefore, to prevent her marrying, he declared he would give her to none but him who should overcome him in a chariot race; and upon condition that the competitors, if vanquished, should forfeit their lives. All who undertook this enterprize perished, except Pelops; who, by great promises, gained over

the coachman of Oenomaus to his interest. Myrtil betrayed his master: he contrived to break the chariot in the midst of the race, and Pelops thus won the princess. He disengaged himself from his promises, by throwing the coachman, who had so faithfully served him, into the sea; which was the cause that Mercury, the father of Myrtil, revenged the death of his son upon the descendants of Pelops.

ACT

ACT the SECOND.

SCENE the FIRST.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, and the CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

* Thou takest advantage I see of the absence of Egisthus, by the liberty thou assumest of coming out of the palace. He only is able to restrain thee, and prevent thy dishonouring us by thy public complaints. And to his absence also is owing the disrespect thou shewest me. I am not ignorant of the reports thou so industriously spreadest. If thou art to be believed, I am an imperious mother, who takes a barbarous pleasure in treating thee ill. No, Electra, I am not what thou representest me to be. If I have given thee any cause of complaint, thy frequent reproaches have forced me to it. I have sacrificed thy father (for this is thy only pretence): well, and why should I not confess that I have sacrificed him? Trust me, it was the just Goddess of vengeance who sacrificed him by my hand: and in so equitable an action thou ought'st to have willingly lent thy assistance. For did not this father, so long and so vehemently deplored by thee, sacrifice his own daughter thy unhappy sister*? He only of all the Greeks was capable of such cruelty. Unnatural and inhuman father, he felt not like me what such a sacrifice must cost a mother. Say, then, for whom did he murder his daughter? For the Greeks, thou wilt answer. For the Greeks! What right had the Greeks to expect, that my blood should be shed for them? Was it done in favour of Menelaus? But ought this impious compliance to remain unpunished? Had not Menelaus two pledges of his marriage†? Why was not one of those sacrificed for him, on whose account they undertook this fatal voyage? Would Pluto, greedy of his prey, have been less willing to accept a child of Helena's than mine? No: but my cruel husband forgot that I was his

* This whole scene, between the mother and daughter, is so much in the Greek manners, that no art is capable of rendering it exactly, and yet agreeable to us. I was apprehensive that a too close translation would rob it of all its beauty.

† Iphigenia.

‡ Hermione and Nicostratus, according to Hesiod; but Homer gives her only Hermione.

wife, and that Iphigenia was his daughter, to remember only that he was the brother of Menelaus. Did not this act prove him a most unnatural father? In this light I consider him. You think differently I know: but if Iphigenia, whom he murdered, could appear again, she would avow the same sentiments as I do. I never therefore can repent of the just revenge I have taken; but if thou still think'st me to blame, tell me so with moderation. On this condition I will suffer myself to be reproved by a daughter.

E L E C T R A.

At least thou wilt not say this once, that I have been the first to excite thy anger against me, since I have listened to thee in silence; but, if thou wilt permit me to speak, I will venture to defend the cause of a father and a sister.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

Speak, I give thee leave. If thou had'st always been thus temperate, thou should'st have had no reason to complain of my harshness to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Deign then to hear me. Thou hast killed my father, and thou own'st the deed! Whether this punishment was justly or unjustly inflicted, for thee to inflict it was most horrible. But setting aside the enormity of the deed I will prove to thee, that the revenge itself was unjust; and that the first mover of it was that traitor who is now called thy husband. Ask of Diana, why the Grecian fleet was detained by contrary winds in the port of Aulis, or rather suffer me to tell thee for her. My father (as I have formerly heard it related) hunting one day in a wood, sacred to this Goddess, happened by chance to rouse a hind* that she was fond of: he pierced it; and, transported with his success, suffered some irreverent words against the Goddess to escape him. Diana, enraged at this action, and at his want of respect for her, instantly punished the Grecian army; and declared, that it should never get out of the port, till the death of her hinds was attoned for by my father, with the sacrifice of his daughter. The Goddess was obeyed. How could her command be dispensed with? Was there any other means of opening a way for the passage of the Greeks to Troy, or for their return into their own country? Thus a

* In the original, a hind, with a spotted skin.

wretched father, after having long resisted, long struggled with the dire necessity, saw himself at length constrained to sacrifice his daughter to the common cause of Greece, not to Menelaus. But had the latter been the real case (for I will enter into thy reasons), ought he on that account to have perished by thy hands? By what law didst thou take away his life? Take care how thou establishest so detestable a law among mankind, lest by doing so thou should'st thyself pronounce thy own sentence.----Yet listen to me: if, to revenge a daughter, it is lawful for thee to kill a husband, may not another revenger rise, authorised even by thy example? Answer me, oh queen (if yet my freedom has not exceeded the bounds thou hast prescribed it), how can the wife of Agamemnon behold his bed polluted by the most infamous of men, by the base accomplice of parricide? Not satisfied with giving brothers and sisters to those who are the fruits of a holy marriage, how can'st thou treat us like slaves? Is it possible to justify such conduct? Can'st thou say, that by acting thus thou revengest a daughter? Ah! is it by adultery that daughter is revenged? But I have gone too far. I will again take shelter in silence. It is not safe to speak my sentiments freely: soon would thy rage burst forth; soon would'st thou proclaim, that a daughter has dared to insult her mother. Yet thou ought'st to acknowledge, that the soft name of mother is not due from me to thee. My misery shews too plainly, that I have no mother in Clytemnestra. To what a wretched condition has thy cruel compliance with thy tyrant's will reduced me? Orestes, with difficulty snatched out of thy hands, drags an unhappy life in exile. Often do'st thou reproach me with preserving him, to give me one day my revenge. Know then (to carry my freedom to its utmost length), know, that had my strength been equal to my courage, I would already have prevented him. I have now given thee an ample subject to expatiate upon. Proclaim that I am insolent, cruel, and inflexible. I consent thou should'st. For if I have these great qualities, I shall be excusable; since I derive them from thee: and surely I ought not to blush that I resemble thee.

C H O R U S.

The princess, it is true, abandons herself to her anger; but ought it not to be considered, whether she has not too much cause?

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

All her arguments have been considered: but ought a daughter

ter * to treat a mother thus? These beginnings shew too well what she is capable of, and that she has lost all shame.

E L E C T R A.

No, Clytemnestra, I have not lost all shame. I know the rage, the fury that transports me. I blush for it. These railings suit not my age and rank. All this I acknowledge: but ought'st thou to reprove me? Thou! whose discourse and conduct force me, in spite of myself, to imitate thee. Thou justifiest me by thy own example. These are thy own lessons.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

What lessons, wretch? Is it my behaviour then that forces thee to use this language?

E L E C T R A.

Thou hast said it. Thou know'st how thou treatest me; and this freedom which displeases thee is the consequence.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

I swear by Diana, Egisthus, when he returns, shall revenge the insolence thou hast dared to shew me.

E L E C T R A.

Well, and art thou not now enraged? Hast thou forgot that thou didst permit me to speak freely? I have, and thou hast not been able to hear me patiently.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

What, because I gave thee leave to speak without disguise, hast thou a right to disturb my sacrifice by an ill presage †?

E L E C T R A.

Perform thy sacrifice: I will not trouble it. Nay, thou wilt oblige me by this act. Be no longer apprehensive of my too great freedom: I am silent.

‡ C L Y T E M N E S T R A *approaches the altar.*

Bring me [*To one of her women.*] that offering of different fruits, to burn in honour of Apollo. Oh! may he hear my prayers, accept

* In the Greek, *at this age.*

† The antients carried their superstition so far, as to regard as a fatal presage whatever they heard, either melancholy or dis-

agreeable, during their sacrifices. From whence came the saying, *favete linguis.*

‡ There is here an artifice of the stage which it is necessary to explain. Clytemnestra

cept my sacrifice, and [*In a low voice.*] dissipate my fears. [*Aloud.*] Great Deity, protector of this palace *, hear favourably my secret vows. [*Low.*] In Electra thou behold'st a malignant witness, and mine are wishes not to be revealed. Her hatred, her insolence to me thou know'st. She will fill the city with false reports. Deign then to hear the sense rather than the expression of my desires. [*Aloud.*] If the dream I have had this night be a fortunate presage, oh king of Lycia, confirm it: but if it be an unfavourable augury, grant that the effect of it may fall upon my enemies. Should any of them form schemes against me, permit them not to overthrow that happiness which I see myself possessed of. Preserve me in the tranquility I now enjoy, upon the throne of the Atrides, and in the soft society of those I love. Give me to pass peaceful and happy days with such of my children whom a blind Fury has not animated against me. These are the prayers which I conjure thee to grant, in favour of those which my soul conceives in secret. Thou who art a Deity can'st comprehend my silence. Nothing is hid from the Son of Jupiter.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

To them the G O V E R N O R.

G O V E R N O R.

I beg you tell me, is not this the palace of king Egisthus?

C H O R U S.

It is.

G O V E R N O R.

Do I not I see his wife also? That majestic air speaks her a queen.

Electra retires to that side where the altar is placed. She prays, and offers her sacrifice there, while Electra remains on the stage at a little distance from her. We must therefore suppose, that the queen speaks sometimes aloud and sometimes in a low voice, as appears by the purport of her prayer; for she is afraid lest her daughter should hear her. She will not, as Juvenal says (*aperto vivere voto*) proclaim the wishes she has formed; therefore she intreats Apollo to regard rather the sense than the expres-

sion of her desires, for fear that if they were too plainly expressed Electra should discover what they are. On the other hand, she must express this fear in a voice so low that Electra may not hear it. All the rest of her prayer she artfully pronounces aloud, that Electra may have no reason to believe there is any thing mysterious in it.

* In the original, *At the gate of which thy altar is placed.*

R 2

C H O R U S.

CHORUS.

Thou art right, it is Clytemnestra whom thou seest yonder.

GOVERNOR.

I bring thee, princess, from a friend such news as will be agreeable both to thee and to Egisthus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With joy I accept this augury. Well, who sent thee? Say.

GOVERNOR.

A Phocian of Panope. My message is of great importance to thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What is it? Speak freely: from a friend nothing unfavourable can be expected.

GOVERNOR.

Orestes is dead.

ELECTRA.

Orestes dead! Wretch that I am, I am undone.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What say'st thou, stranger? Go on, I beseech thee, regard not her exclamations.

GOVERNOR.

Once more I repeat it, Orestes is dead.

ELECTRA.

'Tis done! I am lost.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cease these importunate cries. And do thou, oh stranger, inform me how died this prince?

GOVERNOR.

Princess, thou shalt know every circumstance of his death; for it was for this purpose I was sent to thee. Orestes went to the Delphic games, celebrated by all Greece. Already the sound of the trumpets was heard, and the herald had proclaimed the first of these games, which was the horse-race, when Orestes appeared in the lists, with a lustre that charmed all the spectators. His success was answerable to the hopes that were conceived of him.

He

He carried away the prize, and returned crowned with glory. No one ever remembered to have seen such force and valour united. He remained victor in the five combats. Nothing was heard but acclamations of joy. The title of Prince of Argos, the name of Orestes, resounded from all parts. Long live the son of Agamemnon, the son of the great general of the Grecian army. Such was the general cry, and such the glory of his triumph: but when a Deity has decreed our destruction, what mortal, however distinguished by the most heroic exploits, can escape his powerful arm? The next day was destined for the chariot race. The sun was scarcely risen when Orestes appeared in the midst of a great number of competitors. † One of them was an Achaian; ‡ another, a Spartan, two came from Lybia: but all were famous for their skill in the art of driving chariots. Orestes, seated upon his, which was drawn by Thessalian horses, made the fifth ||. There appeared also in the list a native of Ætolia, with yellow horses; a Magnesian ¶; an Ænian, with black courses; a ninth competitor from Athens; and, lastly, a Beotian †† drove the tenth chariot, and closed the train. These ten combatants having taken their places, which the judges had assigned them by lot, started instantly from the post. One might hear them animate their foaming steeds, and behold them shake the reins. The heavy sounds of rolling chariots ring through the lists. A cloud of dust rises into the air, and covers them: the competitors mingle in confusion, using their utmost efforts to leave the wheels and breath of the horses behind them: for the smoking foam and the cloud formed by the horses breath was seen to whiten the wheels and the back part of the chariots. Orestes had already reached the last goal, and, endeavouring to turn his axle round it, loosed the reins of the right hand horse, while he held the other in. The chariots had hitherto passed all without any misfortune, when on a sudden the horses of the warrior of Ænia grew unruly; and at the sixth and seventh compass rushed against the chariot of the Lybian. This was the

† In imitation of the twenty-third book of the Iliad.

‡ A considerable province of Greece, which extends itself on each side of the isthmus of Corinth, and containing almost the whole compass of the gulph to the north, east, and south.

|| A large province in Greece, to the north of Achaia.

¶ A province of Thessaly, in the Ægean sea.

†† Beotia, a province of Greece, to the north of Attica; between the Euripus and the gulph of Corinth.

beginning of that confusion which presently was universal, and in which the chariots were pushed one upon another. The fragments, with which the field was covered, had the appearance of a shipwreck. * The Athenian, who was a skilful charioteer, escaped the danger. He sprung out on one side, and, stopping his career, let the chariots that were following him in a line break themselves in this general tumult one against another. Orestes, who had reached the goal, and was making his last compass about it, flattered himself with a hope that victory was at hand: but seeing that one opponent yet remained, he drove his horses with more vehemence and less care. He pursued him so eagerly that he overtook him, and their chariots now appeared to run abreast. Sometimes the horses of the Athenian had the whole length of the head before those of Orestes; sometimes those of Orestes had the same advantage. To conclude, the unhappy prince of Argos had already completed his whole course, without any hurt to his chariot, when, letting loose the reins on the left hand, as the chariot turned about, he unfortunately struck against the goal. His axle was broken: the prince was thrown out, and entangled in the reins. The horses took fright at his fall, and flew out, without keeping any certain tract. At the sight of this sad accident the whole assembly burst into lamentations, and deplored the fate of the hero, carried off in the flower of his age. "Consider his actions," said they, "and behold his fate." In the mean time, Orestes, dragged through the dust, with his head on the ground and his feet aloft, struggled in vain to disentangle himself. At length his furious coursers were, with difficulty, stopped, and he was taken up without motion or life, and so covered with his blood that he could not be known. A pile was raised, and his body was consumed. The narrow compass of an urn of brass contains the ashes of a form once so great and so majestic; and it was delivered to the men of Phocis, that he might have at least the melancholy privilege of finding a grave in his native country. Such, oh queen, is the doleful accident which I had to relate. The relation cannot be heard without pain; but the sight of which I was a witness was the most dreadful that ever I beheld.

* An allegory very grateful to the Athenians, whose politics the poet intended to praise. See what has been said on this subject in the third discourse.

CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

Alas! alas! this branch of our antient monarchs is then intirely cut off!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh Jupiter! what ought I to think of my son's fate? Ought I to call it fortunate, or deplorable? To me indeed it brings a real advantage; but oh how unhappy am I to purchase the preservation of my life by new misfortunes!

G O V E R N O R.

How, princess! does this relation afflict thee then?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I am a mother, and therefore wretched. ---- A mother, however injured, cannot hate her child.

G O V E R N O R.

Thou sighest. I perceive it. And I am come in vain.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do not think so. I receive with satisfaction these certain proofs of the death of a son, who, forgetting the womb that bore him, the bosom that gave him suck, and all those tender cares his infancy cost me, has had the cruelty to fly my presence, and live far from me in a foreign country; who, since his departure, has reproached me with the death of his father, and dared to threaten me with a barbarous vengeance. His menaces, which night and day were ever present to my mind, suffered me not to enjoy the blessing of one peaceful slumber. The terrors of that fate, which he prepared for me, incessantly pursued me. I languished like a victim devoted to certain death. But this day, this happy day, delivers me at length from all my anxiety. I have no longer any thing to dread either from him, or from this domestic foe, more dangerous still than he was. She seemed already to pierce my bosom, to slake her thirst of my blood. But from henceforth freed from my torturing apprehensions, and safe from all her threats, my days will glide away in peace.

E L E C T R A.

Miserable Electra! thou hast but too much cause to lament Orestes, since, torn from thee by a death so cruel, thou hear'st his injured shade thus barbarously treated by a mother. Oh Gods! was it this I expected from you?

CLY-

E L E C T R A.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No, it was not this thou expected'st; but it was this that Orestes had reason to expect.

E L E C T R A.

Goddeſs of vengeance, hear that blood which ſhed invokes thy aid.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The equitable Goddeſs has heard thoſe prayers ſhe ought to hear.

E L E C T R A.

Go on, inhuman mother, go on: add inſult to diſtreſs. Fortune ſmiles on thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How! would Oreſtes and thee ſtill pretend to preſcribe laws to me?

E L E C T R A.

Neither Oreſtes nor I are any longer in a condition to hurt thee; now give free courſe to all thy fury.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou haſt indeed, oh ſtranger, done me a ſervice which merits my acknowledgement, were it only the ſilencing theſe troubleſome clamours.

G O V E R N O R.

My taſk is performed, oh queen, I take my leave.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou muſt not go. I ſhould be guilty of ingratitude to thee, and to him that ſent thee, if I ſuffered thee to depart thus. Enter the palace with me, and leave her here, to deplore her miſfortune, and thoſe of him whom ſhe regrets.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

E L E C T R A, the C H O R U S.

E L E C T R A.

What think you of the grief, the groans, the tears, with which this mother honours the funerals of her ſon? Unnatural mother! Her joy betrayed itſelf at parting: ſhe even dared to inſult his indignant ſhade by her ſmiles. Oh wretched Electra! Oh my beloved brother! What do I not loſe in loſing thee? Alas! I waited

waited for the happy day, when thou should'st revenge thy father and me. Vain hope! What will become of me now, thus solitary, deprived of a father and of thee? Must I be still the slave of my most cruel enemies, of those who murdered my father? Oh Gods! Was it this I expected from your justice? No, I will live no longer with them. My resolution is fixed. Languishing at the gate of this palace, abandoned as I am, my griefs, my incessant griefs, shall consume me. Let my tyrants, if tired out with my tears and groans, give me that death I wish for. Since life is a punishment, death will be a relief. For oh! in the sad condition to which I am now reduced, can I, ought I, to desire my miserable days should be prolonged?

SCENE the FOURTH.
SECOND INTERLUDE.

ELECTRA joins the CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Oh Jupiter! where are thy thunders? Oh sun! where are thy STROPHES I.
darting fires? Can you, ye equitable Gods, behold these horrors and let your vengeance sleep?

ELECTRA.

Oh heaven!

CHORUS:

Alas! daughter, why do'st thou thus abandon thyself to grief?

ELECTRA.

Oh!

CHORUS.

Yield not thus to thy despair.

ELECTRA.

Alas! you murder me.

CHORUS.

How, princess!

ELECTRA.

Perceive you not that by encouraging me to hope, and, alas! in whom? in the dead, you have opened my wounds and increased my despair.

Vol. I.

S

ELECTRA.

C H O R U S.

ANTISTRO-
PHE.

Amphiaraus *, that king whom his wife, seduced by bribes, betrayed to death, and who in the shades -----

E L E C T R A.

Alas! alas!

C H O R U S.

Reigns for ever.

E L E C T R A.

Oh!

C H O R U S.

Thou hast reason to be thus affected with Eriphyle's crime. It was execrable.

E L E C T R A.

But was she not punished for it?

C H O R U S.

She fell a victim to her own treachery.

E L E C T R A.

I know she did. Amphiaraus found a revenger. But as for me, I have no longer any support. The only one which remained is vanished; vanished like a dream; he is no more -----

C H O R U S.

Unhappy princess, how great are thy misfortunes!

E L E C T R A.

Misfortunes without example, without number, without end. I know them but too well; too well have I proved them so.

C H O R U S.

Alas! we are not ignorant of the too just cause thou hast to weep.

* The Chorus, to comfort Electra, produce an example of a husband betrayed by his wife, as Agamemnon was by Clytemnestra, and this was Amphiaraus. As he was a prophet, he knew he should perish at the siege of Thebes, which was undertaken by Polynices. To avoid his destiny he concealed himself; but Eriphile, his wife, seduced by the presents of Polynices, discovered the stratagem of her husband,

and the place where he lay concealed; he was swallowed up in the earth at the siege of Thebes. His son Alcmaeon revenged his death, by killing his mother; and, like Orestes, was afterwards haunted by the Furies. Ovid Metam. b. 9. v. 406.

*Seductusque suos mores tellure videtur
Vivus adhuc vates* —

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

131

ELECTRA.

Do not then attempt to comfort me, when you know -----

CHORUS.

What, princess?

ELECTRA.

That the hopes I founded on this dear brother, whom I lament, are buried with him.

CHORUS.

Destiny has decreed it thus. Death is the lot of mortals.

ELECTRA.

But does Destiny decree that every mortal shall perish in sports and exercises; that, entangled in the reins of a chariot, they should be torn in pieces, like my unhappy brother?

CHORUS.

This misfortune could neither be foreseen nor avoided.

ELECTRA.

Alas! who could indeed have foreseen, that he should die in a distant land, nor have a sister at least to pay him the last duties -----

CHORUS.

Alas!

ELECTRA.

To bury him, and wash him with her tears!

ACT the THIRD.

IN ONE SCENE.

CRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Pardon, my dear Electra, the joy that hastens me back to thee. If these transports seem indecent in the present state of our affairs, they are occasioned by my eagerness to acquaint thee with an un-hoped-for happiness. Those misfortunes thou hast so long lamented will shortly have an end.

S 2

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

What remedy can'st thou find for evils which admit of none?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Orestes is here. Think this as certain as if thou had'st seen him with thine own eyes.

ELECTRA.

Unhappy sister, what do'st thou mean? What madness is it thus to sport with my distress, and in our common misfortunes to impose upon each other!

CRYSOTHEMIS.

No, Electra. I swear by this palace of our ancestors what I have said was not to insult thy sorrows. I repeat it again, Orestes is here.

ELECTRA.

Alas! and who has told thee this? By what deceiver hast thou been persuaded to believe it?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

I heard it not from any one; but I have seen, yes, sister, I have seen, undoubted marks of his return.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast seen, oh heaven! what hast thou seen? What foundation hast thou for this wild hope?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Hear me, in the name of the Gods; then judge if I have lost my reason.

ELECTRA.

Well, I will hear thee, since thou wilt have it so.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

I shall relate nothing but what these eyes have seen. Scarce had I arrived at Agamemnon's tomb, when I beheld fresh streams of milk running from the top of the sepulchre; and the sepulchre itself adorned with flowers of every kind. Astonished at the sight, I looked around me, to see if any person was concealed there. I saw no one: all was quiet. I drew near to the tomb, and at the bottom I discovered several locks of hair, which appeared to have been lately cut off. Instantly the idea of him who is most dear

to us, Orestes, rose to my thoughts. I recollected that air, those features, which are ever present to my mind, and the longer I gazed upon these monuments of his filial piety, the more was I persuaded by a secret presage that I was not mistaken. Tears of tenderness and joy flowed from my eyes, and I remained fully convinced that my conjectures were true. And so I am still Electra. For from whom could such gifts come? From thee or me? From me I am sure they did not; nor from thee. Who could have carried them thither? Thou hast not the liberty of going even to the temples of the Gods: and Clytemnestra, it is well known, is not disposed to make such offerings; and surely she would not have made them unknown to us. Ah! doubtless they came from Orestes. Be comforted then, Electra. The Gods do not persecute the unfortunate for ever. This day perhaps may be the source of long felicity to us.

ELECTRA.

Alas! Crysothemis, the error thou art in excites my pity.

CRYSTHEMIS.

How! Does not the news I bring rejoice thee?

ELECTRA.

Ah! sister, believe me, thou know'st not how thou art deceived; nor how thy imagination wanders.

CRYSTHEMIS.

What mean'st thou, Electra? May I not be certain of what I have seen?

ELECTRA.

He is dead, unhappy sister; Orestes is dead, and with him all thy hope. No more expect to see thy brother.

CRYSTHEMIS.

Orestes dead! Who told thee so?

ELECTRA.

A man who was a witness of his fate.

CRYSTHEMIS.

Where is this man? Oh Gods! how great is my astonishment!

ELECTRA.

He is in the palace. Clytemnestra, whose wishes are all accomplished by this news, detains him there.

CLY-

E L E C T R A.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Oh heaven! And who then has presented these offerings at the tomb of my father?

E L E C T R A.

Doubtless some friend of Orestes took upon himself the care of these sad monuments of his piety.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wretch that I am! with what an eager joy I flew to tell thee the happy omens I had seen, ignorant of the new woes into which I was to be plunged. At my return I find those miseries which I thought I had left far, far behind me; and, to complete my wretchedness, I find others which I expected not.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! my dearest sister, it is but too true: but, if thou wilt follow my counsels, thou may'st deliver thyself and me from these calamities.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

What can'st thou require of me which I am able to perform?

E L E C T R A.

I require nothing of thee but courage, to execute what I am going to propose to thee.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Alas! I will do all that in our unhappy situation thou shalt think necessary to be done.

E L E C T R A.

Take care, Crysothemis, how thou engagest thyself by promises to me. Remember that success can only be purchased by fortitude and perseverance.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

This I acknowledge. Behold me then ready to contribute all in my power towards it.

E L E C T R A.

Hear then my scheme. Thou know'st we have now no support, no protector left. The gloomy Pluto has robbed us of our friends. We have no other resource but in ourselves alone. While Orestes lived, I hoped he would one day revenge the murder

der of Agamemnon. He, alas! is no more; therefore I address myself to thee. A barbarous hand, thou know'st it, gave death to our father. He must be revenged, my sister. Why should I dissemble, or keep thee in suspense. Egisthus must be sacrificed to the injured manes of Agamemnon----- Ha! thou startest, thou tremblest-----Weak as thou art, what dost thou now expect? To what far distant hope dost thou now turn thine eyes? Thou, to whom there remains no portion, but vain regret for thy past happiness: thou, who art robbed of thy paternal inheritance: thou, who art condemned to live unmarried, and grow old in grief. For hope not, Crysothemis, ever to be a bride. Egisthus is too politic to suffer that thou or I should give birth to revengers of the blood which he has shed. Follow then the generous counsels of thy sister. By doing so thou wilt acquire a double glory. Thou wilt perform the pious duties which thou owest to a father and a brother: and born free, as thou art, thou wilt preserve that precious freedom, to light one day the torch of Hymen for a husband worthy of thee. 'Tis fame that draws the eyes of mortals on us. Consider then what fame will be thine and mine, if in this noble enterprize thou dar'st to second me. What praises, what honours shall we not receive from strangers, as well as our own citizens! Rapt in admiration of our noble deed, they will point us out to one another, "Behold those glorious sisters," will they say; "they have washed away the stains of infamy from the palace of their ancestors: they have preserved the remains of their family at the hazard of their lives. By them their haughty enemies have been crushed in the very bosom of their felicity. Well do they merit the love and admiration of the whole world. Revered for their immortal courage, 'tis just they should be distinguished in all festivals and assemblies of the people." Such are the praises we shall receive during our lives, and when we die our fame shall still survive us, and consign our names to immortality. I conjure thee then, my dearest sister, yield to such powerful motives, revenge a father, succeed a brother, deliver me, deliver thyself, from our common misfortunes; and oh! remember, that cowardice is a mean vice, and unworthy of thy noble birth.

C H O R U S.

In conjunctures so nice and dangerous as this the assistance of prudence ought to be called in. In giving or receiving counsel prudence is necessary.

C R Y--

You say right; and do you not perceive as well as I, that if her mind was not disordered by grief, she would speak with more reserve and less temerity. For say, Electra, what hope encourages thee to undertake so daring an enterprize? How can'st thou expect I will be the minister of thy fury? Hast thou forgot who thou art, and who he is whom thou would'st oppress? Hast thou forgot thy sex, thy weakness, and the strength and power of thy enemies? Dost thou not perceive that fortune declares for them every day, while we are helpless and abandoned? Alas! what hand is able to strike with impunity a monarch like Egisthus? Be cautious then, Electra: suspect these fallies of thy indignation; trust not this delusive courage: thou art already but too unhappy. Tremble lest thou should'st draw upon thyself miseries still more insupportable. What if some secret enemy should happen to surprise us forming such desperate schemes, where then would be the glory of which thou boastest? What advantage should we derive from it, when it is sullied by a shameful death? But why do I say by death? Death is not the greatest evil to be feared. The punishment reserved for our conspiracy would make death a relief which we should vainly supplicate. Let me conjure thee then, my dearest sister, moderate these furious transports. Let us not condemn ourselves and our whole race to perish by the most dreadful punishments. As for thy impotent schemes, I promise thee I will bury them in eternal silence. But, if it be possible, Electra, recal thy reason; judge rightly of thy own strength and power; learn from thy own weakness, and from time, how to submit to those whose power is superior to thy own.

C H O R U S.

Princess, believe Crysothemis; prudence and moderation are the best presents which the Gods bestow on mortals.

E L E C T R A.

I am not surpris'd at any thing thou hast said, Crysothemis. I expected this refusal. I knew thee too well to hope for any aid from thee. To myself alone then I reserve the execution of this scheme. This hand shall accomplish it. It shall not have been formed in vain.

C R Y S O T H E M I S.

Ah! why had'st thou not these noble sentiments when my
father

father was assassinated? How many miseries would'st thou have spared us!

ELECTRA.

I had them in my breast; but my strength was not equal to my courage.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Well, since thou wilt have it so, persist in these generous designs. I consent to it.

ELECTRA.

Unkind and cruel. Thou speak'st thus only to dispense with thyself from joining me.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Certainly 'tis glorious to undertake great actions, although by doing so we expose ourselves to the most dreadful punishments.

ELECTRA.

I approve thy maxims; but I detest thy cowardice.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

I shall enjoy thy praises when thou art disposed to follow my advice.

ELECTRA.

From me thou never must expect this.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Time will perhaps make it possible.

ELECTRA.

Go, leave me; since I have no resource in thee.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Thou art mistaken, Electra; 'tis thou who art obstinate.

ELECTRA.

Leave me, I say, and fail not to inform thy mother of what thou hast heard.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

No, I am not so much thy enemy: I am not capable of such black treachery.

ELECTRA.

Art thou not my enemy, when thou recommendest a mean submission to me?

ELECTRA.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

I advise thee not to be mean, but prudent.

ELECTRA.

Then thou thinkest it reasonable that I should subscribe to thy decisions?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

When thou hast recalled thy reason, I will submit to thine.

ELECTRA.

How shameful is it to speak so well and act so ill?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

True, Electra; and such is thy misfortune.

ELECTRA.

Say then, what injustice do'st thou find in my proposal?

CRYSOTHEMIS.

The most just designs are often hurtful.

ELECTRA.

I never can approve such maxims.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

If thou persistest in this enterprize, the consequence will justify these maxims; and thou, when it is too late, wilt think them reasonable.

ELECTRA.

I will persist in it, in spite of thy predictions.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

Thou art then resolved upon this deed, and thou wilt no longer listen to my counsel?

ELECTRA.

To me nothing can be more odious than coward counsels.

CRYSOTHEMIS.

'Tis past then, and all that I have said has made no impression on thy mind.

ELECTRA.

Sister, I have well considered all. For know my resolution was taken long before this day.

CRYSO-

CRYSTHEMIS.
I will leave thee then, since thou can'st not approve of my advice,
nor I thy conduct.

ELECTRA.

Farewel; but hope not to be forgiven by me: from this moment I break all commerce with thee. 'Twas madness sure to think of determining a mind so weak as thine to any noble action.

CRYSTHEMIS.

Follow the dictates of thy own judgment, since thou art persuaded it is so superior to mine: but again I warn thee, when thou art plunged in miseries inevitable, thou wilt, spite of thyself, acknowledge I was in the right.

THIRD INTERLUDE.

CHORUS.

Whence comes it, that the birds, the winged inhabitants of air, STROPHE I.
more wise than erring mortals, take care to nourish those who gave them life; while we, ungrateful as we are, unmoved behold so tender an example, and blush to imitate it? But oh great Jupiter! I attest thy thunders; and thy revenge, Goddess of justice, I attest, that such ingratitude never goes unpunished. Oh Fame! thou who fillest the vast extent of earth, penetrate likewise the gloomy regions of hell, and with thy cries disturb the quiet of the dead Atrides. Tell them the crimes that have polluted their wretched house.

Discover to them the wild disorder that reigns there; tell them ANTISTRO-
that discord now divides the two princesses, united once as well by PHE I.
friendship as by the ties of blood. Yet surely Electra merits excuse. Helpless, alone, and destitute of all support, grief, like the waves of a tempestuous sea, o'erwhelms her. She, like the plaintive Philomel, weeps incessantly her father. Death itself cannot terrify her. She braves destruction: all her thoughts terminate in the ruin of two horrible furies.

A generous mind, however pressed by adversity, cannot behold STROPHE II.
its glory changed to disgrace. Oh princess! oh my daughter!
loaded as thou art with the weight of hateful life, and now arm-

ing thyself against the guilty, to avoid dishonour, thine be the praise of filial piety and noble scorn of danger.

ANTISTRO-
PHE II.

Oh may'st thou happily survive the blow thou meditatest! May we behold thee as much superior to thy enemies in strength and power as thou art now oppressed by them! This reward is due to thy unceasing reverence for the Gods, amidst all the horrors of thy present fate.

A C T the F O U R T H.

SCENE the F I R S T.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

ORESTES, *to the Chorus.*

I Beseech you tell me, where are we? Have we not wandered out of our way?

CHORUS.

Whither would'st thou go?

ORESTES.

We have been a long time in search of the palace of Egisthus.

CHORUS.

The palace of Egisthus! There it is.

ORESTES.

Which among you will acquaint Egisthus with our arrival here? It cannot but be agreeable both to him and us.

CHORUS.

* The princess will undertake this. It must be done by some person belonging to the palace.

ORESTES.

Princess, be pleased to tell Egisthus, that some persons from Phocis desire to speak to him.

* This is an artifice of the Chorus to avoid attending Electra, by undertaking a commission which must needs be disagreeable to her. It is at the same time an instance of the great address of the poet, who

by this means prevents Orestes from entering the palace immediately, and thus introduces that beautiful discovery of the brother.

ELECTRA.

Ah, wretched that I am, what a commission hast thou given me? Art thou not sent to confirm the fatal news we have heard?

ORESTES.

I know not what is the news thou speakest of: but I am sent by * Strophius to relate somewhat concerning Orestes.

ELECTRA.

Concerning Orestes! What is it, stranger? Oh, Gods! what terrors seize me!

ORESTES.

In this urn which thou beholdest, we bring the ashes of the dead prince.

ELECTRA.

Oh, miserable wretch, I am now but too certain of my misfortune!

ORESTES.

If thou hast any interest in the fate of Orestes, know that his body is inclosed in this tomb.

ELECTRA.

Give it me, dear stranger: in the name of the Gods I conjure thee, give me this urn. Since it contains the ashes of Orestes, suffer me to embrace it, to weep over it, and lament my misfortunes, and those of my family.

ORESTES, *to one of his attendants.*

Approach. Deliver her the urn. It cannot be from a sentiment of hatred that she demands it. Certainly she is by blood or friendship connected with Orestes.

ELECTRA.

Deplorable monument of him who was dearest to me, unfortunate remains of my loved brother. Oh! with what hopes did I flatter myself when I sent thee out of this palace, with what excess of grief do I receive thee now! I sent thee, my dear prince, alive, and now I hold thy ashes in my arms. Alas! since thou wast to be ravished from me, why did I not lose thee here? I snatched thee from the cruel fate that threatened thee, and oh!

* King of Crissa, and father of Pylades. after Electra had preserved him from Cly-Orestes lived concealed in his dominions, temnestra, and managed his escape.

thou didst perish in a distant land. Had death torn thee from me here, thou would'st at least have had a place in the tomb of thy father. But, alas! far from this palace, separated from thy sister, and banished to another country, thou hast been the prey of a most cruel death, and no loved hand has paid thee the last honours of the tomb. For, miserable as I am, I have not had the melancholly comfort of washing thy dear remains, nor bearing the precious burden to the funeral pile. These services thou received'st from foreign hands, and thou returnest to mine shut up in the narrow compass of an urn. Oh! how vain were all those cares thy tender infancy has cost me: cares, how soft, how tender, how endearing; but oh! how fruitless now. Alas! thou knew'st, my dearest prince, I loved thee like a mother: I held the place of one; and though I was thy sister only, yet thou gavest me a more tender name. All this is dead with thee. Death, like a raging storm, has with thee wrecked all my hopes. I have lost my father; thou art no more, and I am dead with thee. Mean time our enemies triumph; our barbarous mother abandons herself to her impious joy. By thee she was to have been punished. This justice thy secret letters made me hope for: but that malignant power which presided over thy destiny and mine has blasted all our schemes, by giving me, instead of thee, an empty shade, a little lifeless dust. Alas! alas! unfortunate remains, unfortunate Electra! Oh my Orestes! Oh fatal journey, that winged his fate! I have lost him, lost him for ever! Oh! most beloved, receive me in thy urn; unite the sister and the brother: we shall meet in the gloomy regions of the dead, and never more be separated. Whilst thou livedst I shared all thy misfortunes; Oh! let me share thy tomb. Death is my only wish; and this urn shews me, that the dead have no sense of misery.

C H O R U S.

Remember, Electra, thou owest thy birth to a mortal father. So did Orestes. Moderate then thy grief: death is the inevitable lot of mortals.

O R E S T E S, *in great emotion.*

Oh heaven! what shall I say to her? Shall I declare myself, and how begin? These transports will discover me. I can no longer suppress them.

E L E C T R A.

What means the emotion I see thee in? What would'st thou say?

O R E S T E S.

ELECTRA.

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ORESTES.

Is it then Electra whom I see, that fair one?-----

ELECTRA.

I am Electra: but oh! in what a situation dost thou see me!

ORESTES.

Oh Gods! overwhelmed with misery -----

ELECTRA.

Say, stranger, why these sighs? Why this concern for me?

ORESTES.

Oh! that beauty, how faded by barbarous treatment!

ELECTRA.

Whose misfortunes dost thou thus pathetically lament?

ORESTES.

Oh! thy sad days, how have they passed away, without support or comfort?

ELECTRA.

Again I ask thee, generous stranger, why dost thou sigh thus, and fix thine eyes upon me?

ORESTES.

Alas! till now I knew not all my misfortunes.

ELECTRA.

And is it by my words that thou begin'st to know them?

ORESTES.

By seeing thy afflictions.

ELECTRA.

Alas! thou seest but a small part of them.

ORESTES.

Hast thou then greater miseries to complain of than those I see?

ELECTRA.

Yes, I am obliged to live with the murderers of -----

ORESTES.

What murderers? Of whom?

ELEC-

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

The murderers of my father: and, to increase my sorrow, I see myself constrained to be their slave.

O R E S T E S.

Their slave! Oh! who has reduced thee to this sad extremity?

E L E C T R A.

A cruel enemy, who is called my mother: but, alas! she has nothing of a mother but her name.

O R E S T E S.

How does she impose this hard necessity upon thee? By violence or poverty?

E L E C T R A.

By poverty, by violence, and every kind of cruelty.

O R E S T E S.

And hast thou not one friend to oppose this barbarous mother? None who will lend thee their assisting hand?

E L E C T R A.

None. The only protector I had left is now no more. That dear protector was my brother, whose ashes thou hast brought me.

O R E S T E S.

Alas, unhappy princess! the state to which I see thee reduced excites my softest pity.

E L E C T R A.

Thou art the only one here on whom my griefs make any impression.

O R E S T E S.

And I am the only one who comes to shew thee how much these griefs afflict me.

E L E C T R A.

Art thou then one of my relations?

O R E S T E S.

I came to confide a secret to thee, if I might depend upon the fidelity of thy companions.

E L E C T R A.

I will answer for their fidelity: speak freely.

O R E S T E S.

ORESTES.

Forego that urn then. On this condition will I speak.

ELECTRA.

Oh! stranger, I conjure thee by the Gods force it not from me.

ORESTES.

Suffer me to take it from thee. Believe me, thou shalt have no cause to repent it.

ELECTRA.

* By thy sacred face, which I now touch, I conjure thee, take not from me these dear relicks.

ORESTES.

No, I will not permit thee to keep what affords but too much nourishment for thy grief.

ELECTRA, *embracing the urn.*

Oh! my Orestes, I shall be doubly wretched, if I am deprived of thy dear remains.

ORESTES.

Entertain better hopes; and be assured, thy grief is now unreasonable.

ELECTRA.

What! shall I not weep a brother?

ORESTES.

This mournful language is not for thee.

ELECTRA.

Am I then unworthy to lament the dear deceased?

ORESTES.

Thou art not: but again I repeat it, it is not for thee to weep.

ELECTRA.

Shall I not weep Orestes, yet hold his ashes in my hands?

ORESTES.

Orestes is not there: 'tis a feigned urn.

ELECTRA.

Oh! where then is the real urn of that unhappy prince?

* A manner of supplication.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Orestes lives.

ELECTRA.

What say'st thou, dear stranger?

ORESTES.

The truth.

ELECTRA.

Does Orestes live then?

ORESTES.

He lives ----- for I live.

ELECTRA.

Thou! art thou Orestes?

ORESTES.

I am. Look on this ring. It was my father's. Now judge if I deceive thee.

ELECTRA, *after having examined the ring.*

Oh day! the best, the happiest of my life!

ORESTES.

Blest, blest moment!

ELECTRA.

Is it then thee? Is it thy voice I hear, my dear Orestes!

ORESTES.

It is thy brother. Seek no other proofs.

ELECTRA.

Do I embrace thee then? Have I at length found thee, oh my brother?

ORESTES.

Yes; and no more to part.

ELECTRA.

Oh! my dear companions, behold, behold Orestes! He whom a feigned death had ravished from me! He lives, and is this day restored to me.

CHORUS.

We see him, princess; and a blessing so unhop'd for draws tears of joy from us.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Precious branch of our great ancestors, oh, my Orestes, what a happy turn of fortune do we experience! Again we are met, again thou seest thy native country; the object of thy wishes!

ORESTES.

Yes, my dear Electra, thou beholdest thy brother: but moderate these transports; we will indulge them at a time more seasonable.

ELECTRA.

How?

ORESTES.

Speak not, I conjure thee; those within will overhear us.

ELECTRA.

No, by the chaste Diana, the women of this palace shall never from this moment raise my fears; no more shall the vile troop boast of their power over Electra.

ORESTES.

Be cautious, sister. Mars sometimes arms their feeble hands: thou know'st it but too well.

ELECTRA.

Alas! what woes dost thou recal to my remembrance! horrible crimes! miseries inexplicable, miseries which no time can efface---

ORESTES.

I will hear all at a more proper season. Thou shalt tell me all, Electra.

ELECTRA.

Ah! to me all seasons are proper for a subject so interesting. Have I not yet recovered my liberty then?

ORESTES.

Yes, thou art free, my sister: yet once more I conjure thee to be calm.

ELECTRA.

Well, what shall we do? What shall we undertake?

ORESTES.

This is not a time or place to hold discourse in.

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

What shall prevent me from indulging these soft transports for a return so miraculous, so unhop'd for?

O R E S T E S.

Thou beholdest me, Electra, now when the Gods permit.

E L E C T R A.

Have then the Gods directed thee? Oh! how thou enhancest my joy! What a blest preface! What may I not expect from it!

O R E S T E S.

'Tis with regret, my dear Electra, that I constrain thy joy: but I am apprehensive of some fatal consequence.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! what would'st thou have me do? So ardently wish'd for, so long and so impatiently expected, now to be blest with thy sight; thou found'st me in affliction, in tears, and would'st thou -----

O R E S T E S.

What is it thou would'st say, Electra?

E L E C T R A.

Would'st thou deprive me of that innocent delight I taste in seeing thee again?

O R E S T E S.

No, certainly: and I should be enraged if any other deprived thee of it.

E L E C T R A.

Suffer me then to enjoy this happiness.

O R E S T E S.

How can I hinder it?

E L E C T R A, *to the Chorus.*

You know, my friends, when the fatal news of my loved brother's death first reached my ears, I broke not out in cries and groans; my grief was dumb. But now, my dear Orestes, now that I behold thee, that I embrace thee, that from thy dear presence I derive a joy which no succeeding misfortune ever can efface, am I not permitted to give a loose to transport, am I not?-----

O R E S T E S.

O R E S T E S.

No more of this, Electra. Tell me not of my unnatural mother, of Egisthus, that usurper of our inheritance, who devours the unfortunate house of Agamemnon. Whilst thou relatest these horrors, we lose the present happy opportunity. Say only, what in the present conjuncture it is necessary we should do. Dost thou think we can crush our enemies amidst their fancied security? Shall this be done by force or stratagem? But take care, Electra, that on our entrance in this palace, Clytemnestra may not discover any signs of joy in thee. Let not thy countenance betray the least mark of satisfaction. This would ruin us. Endeavour to appear as much afflicted as when the news of my feigned death was brought thee. When we have accomplished our enterprize, then, free from all anxiety, we will no more restrain our mutual joy.

E L E C T R A.

My dearest brother, thy will shall ever be the rule of mine. My joy, 'tis true, has transported me: but to thee this joy was owing. To thee I sacrifice it then. What would I not sacrifice, rather than give thee pain? Were I to do otherwise, I should ill deserve the favour fortune shews us. Know then, that Egisthus is absent; none but Clytemnestra remains in this palace. Thou need'st not be apprehensive of her seeing in my countenance any signs of joy. The enmity I bear her will, in her presence, never fail to spread over it a cloud of sorrow: at least I am still too much astonished at thy so unexpected, so un hoped for return, to be betrayed by any apparent joy. That joy will appear only by my tears, by tears of tenderness. For have I not seen thee in one day dead and alive? Such is the strange surprize I feel, that were my father said to be alive again, to me it would seem no miracle; I should believe it instantly. For is not thy return a miracle? Conduct thy enterprize as thou judgest best: but know; had'st thou never appeared, alone and unsupported as I was, I had determined either to free myself from bondage, or to perish nobly.

O R E S T E S, *or the Chorus.*

Hold, princess. I hear a noise at the palace gates.

E L E C T R A, *altering her voice and manner.*

Enter, oh! stranger, enter. What thou bringest cannot fail of being favourably received. [*Aside.*] But short shall be this joy.

S C E N E

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

To them the G O V E R N O R.

G O V E R N O R.

Oh heaven! what strange imprudence! Have you then lost all care of your lives? What madness! when you not only behold so many dangers near, but that you are in the midst of danger itself, in the palace of your foes. Had I not stood watching at the gate during your conversation, your projects would have sooner appeared there than yourselves. But, thank the Gods, this I have prevented. No more then of this useless discourse, these unseasonable expressions of a joy which will never be exhausted. Enter immediately. In affairs of this importance the least delay is fatal. Now is the time to act.

O R E S T E S.

Let us enter: but in what state are our affairs within?

G O V E R N O R.

As happy a one as thou can'st wish. No one will know thee there.

O R E S T E S.

Thou hast persuaded them then that I am dead.

G O V E R N O R.

Depend upon it, thou art thought by them to be an inhabitant of the shades.

O R E S T E S.

Is their joy perfect? What are their sentiments on this news?

G O V E R N O R.

Hereafter thou shalt be told. It is sufficient now to know, that every thing seems to favour their wishes, at a time when all conspires to overthrow them.

E L E C T R A.

Who is this man, my brother?

O R E S T E S.

How! dost thou not remember him?

E L E C T R A.

I do not.

ELECTRA.

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ORESTES.

The faithful friend to whose care thou formerly didst confide me.

ELECTRA.

What! is it him?

ORESTES.

Yes, he who, in consequence of thy tender solicitude for my safety, carried me to Phocis.

ELECTRA.

Oh heaven! and is this he, that only faithful friend, who, after my father's murder, dared to serve me.

ORESTES.

Be satisfied this is he.

ELECTRA.

Welcome thou only deliverer of Agamemnon's race. By what happy chance do I behold thee here? Thou who hast preserved us from so many miseries; in whose faithful hands I trusted this dear pledge; whose happy flight saved my loved brother from the death which threatened him. How could'st thou hide thyself so long from me? Why wert thou so cruel to give me a thousand deaths by the feigned tale thou told'st? Oh my dear father! for in beholding thee I think I see revived my real father. Know, that in one day thou hast been the object of my detestation and my tenderest friendship.

GOVERNOR.

No more, princess. Let us reserve these conversations for another time. Whole days and nights will scarce be sufficient for the recital of our mutual adventures. Let us go, princes, [*To Orestes and Pylades.*] 'tis time to execute our enterprize. None but women are in the palace now. Should we delay but a few moments longer, more formidable enemies may fall upon us.

ORESTES.

Come then, my dearest Pylades; let us not waste the precious time in fruitless talk. Go in; but first let us invoke the tutelary Gods who guard the entrance of this palace.

ELECTRA.

Oh great Apollo! look with a favourable eye on them and me. Alas! this liberal hand has spread upon thy altar all the gifts my indigent

indigent piety could bring. I have nothing now to offer thee but my vows, my prayers, my adorations; deign to receive them, gracious power, assist us in this great enterprize, and let trembling mortals see how murder and impiety are punished.

FOURTH INTERLUDE.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Oh Mars! what fury dost thou breathe! The dreadful Deity longs to bathe himself in blood. Already the inevitable Furies have possessed this palace: the Furies, horrid attendants on atrocious guilt. This, trembling, I predicted; and the event will soon confirm my words.

ANTISTROPHE.

The son of Agamemnon, the brave revenger of his father, is now in the palace of his ancestors. In secret and in disguise he came. Already is his sword unsheathed, and, soon to be bathed in blood, gleams in his hand. The immortal son of Maia, Mercury himself, guides and protects him. The favouring Deity spreads a veil before his arduous enterprize, and soon shall it be executed.

A C T the F I F T H.

SCENE the F I R S T.

ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

KNOW, friends, the princes are this moment going to execute their enterprize. Do you keep the strictest silence.

CHORUS.

What are they doing?

ELECTRA.

Now, while Clytemnestra is busied in her preparations for the funeral of Orestes, they press about her. She cannot escape them.

CHORUS.

But why dost thou come out of the palace, princefs?

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

I came to hinder Egisthus from surprising them, should he return too soon.

SCENE the SECOND.

ELECTRA, the CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *behind the Scenes.*

Oh friends! where are you? The palace is full of murderers,

ELECTRA.

Heard you that cry?

CHORUS.

Horror seizes me.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *behind the Scenes.*

My dear Egisthus, where art thou?

ELECTRA.

Again she cries.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *behind the Scenes.*

Oh! my son, have some compassion on her who bore thee.

ELECTRA.

Inhuman! didst thou shew any pity either to the son or father?

CHORUS.

Oh wretched city! oh unhappy family! this fatal day completes your miseries!

CLYTEMNESTRA, *behind the Scenes.*

Oh! I am wounded.

ELECTRA.

Strike, strike, repeat the blow, if possible.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *behind the Scenes.*

Again! Oh heavens!

ELECTRA.

Oh! may Egisthus soon share her fate.

Thy imprecations have been fulfilled. The dead revive. They leave their tombs to bathe themselves in the blood of the living.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

ELECTRA, CHORUS, ORESTES, and PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

See, they appear. Behold their hands dyed with the blood they have offered to the God Mars. Well, brother -----

O R E S T E S.

All's secure within the palace, if the Oracle of Apollo does not deceive us. At least thy foe is dead. Thou hast nothing more to fear from her wild rage.

C H O R U S,

Hold. I perceive Egisthus.

E L E C T R A.

Retire, my friends, enter the palace. See you not that haughty enemy, who approaches the city full of a barbarous joy?

C H O R U S.

Princes, withdraw this instant to the palace. May the end of this undertaking be equal to this fortunate beginning.

O R E S T E S.

Fear nothing. Your wishes will be accomplished.

E L E C T R A.

Haste, lose no time, be gone.

O R E S T E S, *at the gate of the palace.*

Now we are safe from view.

E L E C T R A.

I will take care of all things here.

C H O R U S.

Deceive the victim, princess, by some probable discourse, that he may fall more easily into the snare which the Goddess of Vengeance has prepared for him.

S C E N E

SCENE the FOURTH.

To them EGISTHUS.

EGISTHUS.

One of you tell me, where those Phocians are who have brought us the news of Orestes's death. 'Tis said he perished in a chariot-race. But it is from thee, Electra, yes, from thee, notwithstanding all thy past insolence and rage, that I expect to know each circumstance of an event which thou art too nearly interested in not to be well informed of.

ELECTRA.

Thou art in the right; for how indeed can I be ignorant of what concerns a person so dear to me?

EGISTHUS.

Where are these strangers? Deign to inform me.

ELECTRA.

In the palace, where they have found one by whom they could not fail of being well received.

EGISTHUS.

Have they convinced her of Orestes's death?

ELECTRA.

Yes, for they have brought most certain proofs of it.

EGISTHUS.

How! is the dead body of Orestes here then?

ELECTRA.

Yes, thou may'st feast thy eyes on that sad spectacle.

EGISTHUS.

I must needs own, that, contrary to thy custom, thou say'st nothing to me this day but what is pleasing.

ELECTRA.

Go, enjoy this pleasure then, since thou esteemest it such.

EGISTHUS.

My orders are, that the people keep a profound silence, and do thou [*To one of his train.*] direct the palace-gates to be thrown

open, that all the citizens of Argos and Mycene may enter. Approach all of you; and now if there is one amongst you who still encourages delusive hopes, let him come and view the lifeless body of Orestes; let him tremble at that spectacle; let him learn patiently to suffer the yoke; and, if he would not draw my vengeance on himself, let him cease to murmur against his lawful king.

E L E C T R A.

I have done all that duty could require, and time at length has taught me to yield to those in power.

S C E N E the F I F T H.

The gates are thrown open, within appears a body covered.

ORESTES, PYLADES, the GOVERNOR, Train,
ELECTRA, the CHORUS, EGISTHUS.

E G I S T H U S.

Oh Jupiter! what a sight is this for Egisthus! Let his death satisfy my hatred. I know not whether thou, oh Nemesis*! wilt revenge it. But that imports not. Remove [*To Orestes.*] those veils which conceal him from my eyes, that his still streaming blood may draw from me that tribute of tears which I have resolved to pay him.

O R E S T E S.

Remove these veils thyself. It is for thee, not me, to view this coarse, and weep over it.

E G I S T H U S.

Thou art in the right. I will follow thy advice. Thou [*To one of his Train.*] seek Clytemnestra, and bring her hither.

O R E S T E S, *after the veil is taken off.*

Behold her there.

E G I S T H U S.

Oh heaven! what an object -----

O R E S T E S.

What dost thou fear? What is this object which thou feignest not to know?

* The Goddess of Vengeance.

EGISTHUS.

Unhappy man, with what enemies am I surrounded? Into what an ambush am I fallen?

ORESTES.

Till now thou did'st not imagine, that, living as thou art, thou had'st business with the dead.

EGISTHUS.

Alas! I see it but too well. It is Orestes then perhaps who talks thus to me.

ORESTES.

Thou hast guessed truly: but, unhappily for thee, too late.

EGISTHUS.

I am lost. Yet, prince, suffer me to speak one word to thee.

ELECTRA.

Hear him not, brother. Suffer not his words to make any impression on thee. Of what use is the delay of a few moments to a victim loaded with curses and devoted to death? Deliver him as soon as possible to his ill fate; and when thou hast sacrificed him, leave his body to be interred in those * sepulchres which it merits. By this, this only remedy, can'st thou assuage the memory of those woes I have too long suffered.

ORESTES.

Enter this palace. I will not hear thee. Thy sentence is pronounced; enter and suffer it.

EGISTHUS.

Why in this palace must I suffer it? If the deed thou intendest to perform be noble, why seek to cover it with darkness? Behold me here; strike, and give me death.

ORESTES.

It is not for thee to talk thus like a master. Go, wretch; go, I say, to that apartment where my father fell by thy murdering hands: that is the place which I have destined for thy punishment, and my revenge.

* She means the birds. This punishment, which was worse than death itself, bears a relation to the superstition of the Greeks.

E G I S T H U S.

Such is the decree of Fate. This palace then must be a witness to the present misfortunes of the race of Pelops*, and of those future ones which I foretel them.

O R E S T E S.

It shall at least be witness of thy death. My prediction is more certain than thine.

E G I S T H U S.

Thou murderest me in secret. In this thou dost not imitate thy father, who † sacrificed -----

O R E S T E S.

No more. Thou strivest in vain to shun the punishment thou hast deserved. Enter.

E G I S T H U S.

Be thou my guide: I'll follow thee.

O R E S T E S.

Enter, I command thee. It is thy part to obey.

E G I S T H U S.

Art thou afraid that I shall escape from thee?

O R E S T E S.

No ‡: but I will not suffer thee to enjoy the least consolation in thy punishment.

Behind the Scenes.

Stop, receive the stroke I had reserved for thee.

He appears again.

Were all to perish thus who dare to violate the sanctity of laws, crimes would be then less frequent.

C H O R U S.

Oh house of Atreus! by this great deed it is, that, after having endured so many miseries, thou at length recoverest thy former freedom.

* The antients dreaded the imprecations of the dying.

† He reproaches Agamemnon with the murder of Iphigenia.

‡ He denies him the satisfaction of appearing to die voluntarily. He treats him

like a slave who is dragged to punishment, and not like a free person. This judicious observation, which removes that comic idea excited by the difficulty Egisthus makes to go first into the palace, belongs to M. Dacier.

OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

ELECTRA OF SOPHOCLES.

THE *Electra*, as M. Dacier justly observes in the preface to his translation, is a subject which necessarily produces a different kind of tragedy from that of *Oedipus*. All his quotations from Aristotle on this head may be reduced to the distinction which is to be made between the two species of tragedy by the different impressions resulting from them. One is *simple*; when the hero is neither very virtuous nor very wicked, and is led by degrees to absolute misery, as the unfortunate king of Thebes. The other, which Aristotle calls *complex*, shews the guilty punished, and the innocent made happy. The philosopher pronounces this latter kind of tragedy to be less perfect than the former; which, in his opinion, is more really tragic; while the other (judging by the different impressions they leave on the mind) partakes of the nature of comedy. “* Those writers,” adds he, “who have preferred this to the former have regulated their choice by the weakness of the audience, to whose taste and desires the poets generally conform.” Whatever art and delicacy there may be in this subtle remark, yet certainly it is not by this quality that we ought to judge of the merit of tragedies. If the disposition and conduct of each be equally good, the impressions they make, although different, are not less pleasing to the sensations of the human heart; at least the preference will depend entirely upon the present situation, or, if you will, upon the peculiar character of the audience, which it is the poet’s interest to study and to gratify.

We ought therefore to consider the tragedy of *Electra* such as it is in itself, without any regard to the difference between the sentiments it produces, compared with the impression made by that of *Oedipus*. If the expectation of the audience is fully satisf-

* Aristotle’s Poetics, chap. 13.

fied, both pieces have attained their end. The sorrow produced by tragedy is not always exactly the same: but the pleasure which either subject gives is not less exquisite. The transition from anxiety to peace, from perturbation to calmness and serenity, have probably advantages which may counter-balance misfortune to excess.

But, in the first place, we will take a view of those sentiments and incidents which are judged shocking in the *Electra*. And doubtless we cannot without horror behold a son and daughter plunging a dagger in the bosom of their mother. Yet this conduct of Sophocles may, on several accounts, admit of justification. For, first, he takes great care to impress upon the spectators, even from the first scene, that Orestes had formed this scheme by the express order, and executed it under the auspices, of Apollo. And he keeps this in their view; and would have them understand the murder of Clytemnestra to be in some sort an act of religion and obedience to the Gods. But this is to punish an unnatural crime by a horrid impiety to the Gods. The Greeks, full of the extravagant ideas that paganism inspires, easily passed this over. But we, guided by the principles of the true religion, and enlightened by clearer reason, cannot excuse it.

Alcmeon, another subject of Greek tragedy, which we have lost, though Aristotle mentions it, is in the same state with Orestes. Amphiaraus, the father of Alcmeon, being solicited by Polynices, son-in-law of Adrastus, king of Argos, to go with him to the siege of Thebes, which was undertaken to dethrone Eteocles, long obstinately refused to comply with his request. For, being a prophet, he knew that of the seven chiefs who engaged in this enterprize, all but one would perish in it. But to get rid of the importunity of Polynices, he promised to be wholly directed on this occasion by the advice of his wife Eriphile, or, according to others, he hid himself. Polynices bribed Eriphile by a present of great value. She discovered where Amphiaraus lay concealed, and forced him to go to Thebes. This prince at his departure commanded his son Alcmeon, who was then very young, to revenge the death of his father by killing Eriphile; which orders the young prince punctually obeyed. The commands of a father were not certainly of equal weight with those of an Oracle. Yet the ancients were satisfied with this motive for the action of Alcmeon, but we are alike shocked with both. After all, although the Greeks were more indulgent to incidents of this kind than we
can

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can possibly be, and had a particular reverence for the Oracle of Apollo; yet, if we may judge by the judicious rules which Aristotle afterwards laid down upon murders of this kind, they would have wished a different conduct had been observed. It is probable at least that they disapproved of those horrid words which escape Electra while her mother is murdering, "Strike, repeat the blow, if it be possible." Words which raise the highest horror.

It is true (and this is a second argument which may be urged in excuse for Sophocles) that, besides the commands of a Deity, Clytemnestra, on account of her barbarous treatment of Electra, the assassination of her husband, and the death to which she had doomed Orestes, deserved such a punishment, if ever a mother could deserve to die by the hands of her son. And, lastly, Sophocles has in some measure put Orestes and Electra under the necessity of conquering by a crime, or of perishing by their virtue. But not all his art, nor the enormity of a mother's guilt, her cruelty to her children, the death she designed for them, nor even the absolute commands of a Deity, can stifle the cries of nature in the spectators who are sensible to the feelings of humanity. They would have Orestes revenged, but not by his own hand; or, if he killed his mother, that he might kill her without knowing it. They cannot even pardon *Horace*, for killing his sister. This however is the foundation of that astonishing tragic power which we see reign in the three Electras. How is it possible to reconcile sentiments so opposite, in the heart of man? For *Eschylus* and *Euripides*, tho' they have followed another path, have arrived at the same end, or, (if the critics will have it so) have split upon the same rock. They were sensible, that they could not disguise this fact from spectators who were acquainted with history, or, if they softened it, the tragic power would be lost. The bare notion which then prevailed concerning fatality, was sufficient to lessen the horror and atrocity of a meditated parricide, committed in cold blood.

In other respects this tragedy of Sophocles is truly admirable. The opening is a master-piece of art, by which the time, place, and that connexion of incidents which form the piece, are exactly marked. Nothing can be more beautiful and affecting than the grief of Electra. Her character is completely finished in the scene between her and *Crysothemis*: but the finest situation is that wherein the brother and sister are made known to each other.

It was this scene in particular, when, as Aulus Gellius * relates, one Polus, who acted the part of Electra, the better to enter into the character he appeared in, took the urn which contained his son's ashes out of his tomb; and embracing it on the stage, as if it had been the urn of Orestes, filled the whole audience with emotions, not such as are excited by well imitated grief, but with anguish that broke out in cries and tears. In a word, the conduct of this whole piece is so natural, so clear, so nobly disposed, that it becomes every moment more interesting till the conclusion. But without dwelling upon such reflexions as cannot have escaped the readers, those which will result from a comparison of the Electras of Eschylus and Euripides with that of Sophocles, will be more agreeable and of greater use. By this parallel we shall be better enabled to judge of the different merit of the three rivals, and of the different walk of geniuses that treat on the same subject.

* "Polus lugubri habitu Electrae indu-
tus urnam ex sepulchro tulit filii, & quasi
Orestis amplexus, opplevit omnia non si-

"mulacris neque incitamentis, sed luctu
"atque lamentis veris." Aul. Gell. Noct.
Attic. l. 7. c. 5.

THE

THE COEPHORES:

A
TRAGEDY. BY ESCHYLUS.

THE title signifies *Persons who carry libations*; and is taken from the subject itself, which is the same with the *Electra* of Sophocles. Eschylus wrote upon this story before Sophocles; and his principal persons are the same with his. The Chorus is composed of foreign virgins, the slaves of Clytemnestra, and affectionately attached to Electra. As Eschylus introduces them carrying presents to the tomb of Agamemnon, he gives them the name of *Coephores*, which is the title he has taken for his tragedy.

ACT THE FIRST.

The beginning is not entire: but that which is wanting does not hinder us from perceiving the exposition of the subject. In the back part of the scene is the tomb of Agamemnon. Orestes arrives there with Pylades. He invokes Mercury, the Deity who presides over funerals. He cuts off some of his hair to spread upon the tomb; and while he is employed in this pious ceremony, he perceives his sister Electra at a distance, at the head of a company of young girls, who approach, bearing offerings to the dead. Orestes, to avoid being seen, withdraws to a little distance with his friend, after imploring the assistance of Jupiter in the scheme he has formed to revenge his father. This exposition is plain and noble; and shews, that the inventor of tragedy had conceived very exact ideas of it.

The virgins stop at the tomb of Agamemnon; and she who speaks for the rest, declares, that she has conducted the funeral ceremony with wringing of hands. "Their cheeks," adds she, "still shew the recent traces of their grief. Sighs are their nourishment. Their veils and garments are torn. A horrid dream, raised, without doubt, by the indignant shade of Agamemnon, terrifies Clytemnestra, and obliges her to send them to his tomb, to appease him by these gifts. Oh deplorable house! hated by the sun! and by mankind! May darkness cover thee, and revenge the murder of thy sovereign. That majesty of the throne, once so revered, once so famed, is vanished ---- Oh justice! how unequal are thy punishments! On some the Goddess falls with sudden ruin: others she pursues but slowly; and some again hide themselves from her view by the thick night in which they are surrounded ----- Condemned to wretched slavery, I must conceal my hatred for my cruel masters, and approve of these iniquities. But oh Agamemnon! my tears in secret flow for thee; thou, thou art the object of my hidden grief." It is not possible to render literally the force and energy of these verses of the Chorus

ACT THE SECOND.

Electra asks these virgins how she must invoke the shade of her father, to render acceptable to him the presents which they had been obliged to bring to his sepulchre. "Shall I say," adds she, "that they are the gifts of a tender wife to her beloved husband? ---- Oh! can I say this without confusion? Ought I to intreat that he will repay these offerings, sent by a barbarous hand, in a manner worthy of himself and her? Or shall I be silent, turn away my loathing eyes from these unworthy presents, and cast them from me, as things horrid and execrable?" The Chorus advise her to make vows for Orestes and herself, for all that hate Egisthus, and to pronounce imprecations against her enemies. This is done in verses, interrupted by interrogations and answers, to inform Electra of what she must pray for.

She begins thus: "Oh! terrestrial Mercury, deign to inform me, whether my prayers are accepted by the infernal Deities, the witnesses of my father's murder, and by the earth, from whose liberal bosom all things proceed, and to whom all things return? For this I pour this libation. Oh my father! behold us with
 6 "a pity-

" a pitying eye. Restore liberty and empire to Orestes, and to
 " me. An inhuman mother has given thee thy assassin for thy
 " successor. We are all betrayed: I am a slave, my brother is
 " banished from his paternal kingdom, while thy barbarous mur-
 " derers enjoy the fruit of thy toils. Oh! recal Orestes. Grant
 " that my hands may be less guilty than my mother's. And as
 " for our enemies, rise to their view, in awful vengeance rise,
 " and suffer not them who gave thee death, to live and triumph
 " over us. Such is the imprecation which I pronounce upon
 " them." She afterwards invites the Chorus to join in funeral
 cries and songs about the tomb.

The ceremony performed, Electra perceives with surprise some
 locks of hair, resembling her own, lying on the tomb. She is
 convinced they are not Clytemnestra's. A ray of hope darts into
 her mind: she suspects they may have belonged to Orestes. This
 idea penetrates her heart like an arrow, and forces tears of joy
 from her eyes. Thus she expresses herself by an instinct of nature;
 but fear succeeds to hope. Doubtful and perplexed, she advances
 nearer, and observes the print of feet upon the ground exactly
 like her own. All these circumstances increase her anxiety. She
 continues in this uneasy state till Orestes appears. He shews him-
 self suddenly, and makes himself known to be her brother, by pre-
 senting a veil to her which she had wrought herself.

This meeting is not so fine nor so pathetic as that in Sophocles;
 but it is natural, and I see no reason for that assertion of M. Dacier:
 " That it is managed in the coarsest manner imaginable." Nor can
 I conceive why he pronounces it to be a fault, that the brother and
 sister are made known to each other so soon. For upon this arti-
 cle he says, " It is a capital error when this recollection is so
 " far distant from the *peripetie*;" that is, the change of state.
 This remark would be just, if the recollection produced imme-
 diately and suddenly that transition from happiness to misery, as
 is generally the case with the greatest part of tragic subjects. But
 it is not thus with the present. It is necessary that Orestes should
 concert with his sister the plan of that revolution which he de-
 signed to make in the kingdom, by putting his mother and the
 usurper to death. The discovery therefore must be brought
 about soon, in order to produce insensibly, and in a probable
 manner, an effect which is to be sudden, and which requires pre-
 paration. Eschylus then has not erred in this point any more
 than Euripides, as we shall see hereafter. As for Dacier's charge
 of

of coarseness in the management of it, it cannot be better refuted than by translating the following scene.

ORESTES *appears, while ELECTRA is still holding in her hands the hair she had found upon the tomb.*

ORESTES.

Implore the Gods to accomplish the rest of thy wishes.

ELECTRA.

Ha! what have I obtained of them then?

ORESTES.

Thou seest him whom thou hast so ardently desired to see again.

ELECTRA.

Of whom dost thou speak?

ORESTES.

Of Orestes, whose return I know thou hast oft wished for.

ELECTRA.

Have the Gods then given him to me?

ORESTES.

Yes: I am Orestes.

ELECTRA.

Would'st thou, oh! stranger, lay snares for me?

ORESTES.

I should then act contrary to my own interest.

ELECTRA.

Camest thou to insult my grief?

ORESTES.

I share it with thee.

ELECTRA.

How! is it then Orestes that I am speaking to?

ORESTES.

I appear before thee, and thou ought'st to know me, me whose presence thou hast acknowledged in those locks of my hair, and even in the print of my feet, so like thy own. Compare with
thine

thine that hair which belongs to a brother who resembles thee. Acknowledge this robe, the work of thy own hands, this precious embroidery, these figures, &c.

Aristophanes, in his *Clouds* *, slightly ridicules this discovery founded upon a resemblance between hair: a stroke of satire so oblique that Madame Dacier seems not to have perceived, or was not willing to perceive it. But this stroke falls to the ground, since *Electra* does not merely from this resemblance conclude, that her brother is returned: but draws this consequence from many united observations. Euripides also in his *Electra* has some jests upon these three marks which satisfy the princess; namely, the resemblance between her own hair and that she found upon the tomb; the conformity between the prints of a foot which she saw upon the ground, and that of her own; and, lastly, upon the cloth which Euripides civilly calls a robe; tho' the word *ἱμάσιον* signifies likewise a veil, and is used by Æschylus in that sense. Might not Orestes have preserved this robe, and have brought it with him, as a token to convince *Electra* that it was really him. But Euripides, by these sarcasms, not only degrades the majesty of tragedy, which he sinks into comedy, but he exaggerates what may be thought ridiculous in this recollection, or rather, he is desirous of discovering it where it is not.

He does this however in so diverting a manner, that the reader perhaps will not be sorry to see this passage of his *Electra* before he sees the piece itself. An old man who had been a domestic of Agamemnon's returning from his tomb, appears transported with joy. "I have found," says he to *Electra*, "some locks of fair hair, and was extremely surprised at the rashness of those who carried them to the tomb. They doubtless belong to no Argive. It must therefore be to thy brother, who was desirous of honouring the manes of the unhappy Agamemnon. Look at these locks, compare the colour with that of thy own hair: thou knowest those who are nearly allied by blood generally resemble each other."

ELECTRA.

Thou dream'st, old man: is it to be imagined, that the brave Orestes would come privately to Argos, and keep himself con-

* See the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, Act I. Scene the last, in the third volume of this work.

cealed through fear of an Egisthus? (A bad argument against Eschylus. Orestes was alone. It was necessary for him to make use of a stratagem to effect a revolution in the state.) Besides, why should'st thou think his hair would resemble mine? His must necessarily partake of the robust manner in which a young man of his rank is educated, and mine has acquired a softness and effeminacy from the great pains that are taken to adorn our sex.

OLD MAN.

Observe at least the print of his feet upon the ground, compare them with thy own, see whether they are not alike.

ELECTRA.

How is it possible that his feet should have left any impression upon the stones or the hard ground? But grant this to be so, is it to be imagined that the feet of a brother and sister are exactly alike?

OLD MAN.

But if Orestes is really here, would'st thou not know again the robe wrought by thy own hands, in which he was dressed when I stole him away, to preserve him from that death with which he was threatened?

ELECTRA.

Hast thou forgot then, that I was a child when Orestes was carried away? Yet, were it possible that I had wrought him a robe, does he wear that robe still, can'st thou imagine? Is it the fate of garments to grow with the body that wears them? Depend upon it, this is some stranger, a friend of Agamemnon, or some faithful citizen, who has deceived the watchful eyes of guilt and power to bear these melancholly presents to the tomb of the murdered king, &c.

Lastly, it must be confessed, that Aristotle * gives but the second place to those recollections which are founded only upon a resemblance, or upon probability. He even quotes the discovery of Orestes in Eschylus: but this does not prove that it is coarsely managed.

After the first transports for this unexpected meeting are subsided, Orestes addresses an eloquent prayer to Jupiter; in which he implores him to preserve the remains of an illustrious family. He adds, that, by the Oracle of Apollo, he is obliged to revenge

* Aristotle's Poetics, chap. 17.

the death of his father by killing his murderers; that he was threatened with the most cruel punishments by the God, unless he obeyed this command; and, if he did obey it, he should be delivered up to the Furies, be struck with leprosy, or some other dreadful disease, separated from all commerce with mankind, and forced to drag a languishing life. This is strange doctrine! Guilty whether he obeys or disobeys, Orestes is equally threatened with punishment. However, he resolves to obey. Tenderness for a father, as well as compassion for a people, sacrificed to the ambition of an usurper, and a mother guilty of parricide, prevail over every other consideration. In this manner it is that Æschylus endeavours to palliate another parricide by the necessity of committing it.

The Chorus make vows in favour of Orestes; and the brother and sister again indulge their mutual tenderness. In this scene, which, although long, is very spirited, there is a contest between the natural horror of such a crime, and the unrestrained desire of a revenge which appears lawful. It is a loss to our language, that we cannot render in it all the movements of the soul which lie mingled in a croud of expressions and verses so energetic, that they would lose all their beauty in a literal translation. By them we see, that the desire of vengeance is the predominant passion in the heart of Orestes; but combated by some remaining scruples which Electra and the Chorus perceive in spite of him, and which without letting him know that they perceive they endeavour to subdue. "Oh my father!" cries Orestes, "where art thou? Where is that fatal bed in which thou wert murdered?" Electra is agitated with the same emotions of grief and tenderness; and the Chorus exhort them not to weep, but to revenge him for whom they weep. "Alas!" continues the princess, "if thou had'st lost thy life at the siege of Troy, by the hand of some Lycian, thy ashes would have been mingled with those of many illustrious heroes, whose king thou wert." The Chorus invoke Jupiter, the revenger, and the Furies. "Where are ye, infernal Goddesses; ye who never fail to revenge those who have been basely murdered, cast your eyes on the sad remains of the Atrides." But Electra, who finds herself too much softened by fixing her thoughts upon her murdered father only, animates her rage with the idea of a barbarous wife, who plunged a poniard into the heart of her husband; and gives a horrid representation of the act. Upon which Orestes tells her, that he is resolved to kill his mother: and, sighing, adds, that

he will die immediately after her. Electra, who considers this speech and this sigh as the remainder of remorse awakened in his mind, rouses all the rage of her brother against Clytemnestra. "She cut off her husband's hands and feet," says she; "and behold this is the place where she buried them." She then, in a few words, recounts the miseries she has suffered, and invokes her father and the Gods. These frequent invocations, continued alternately, give soul to this whole scene, and are the natural expressions of grief and vengeance. They conjure Agamemnon to remember the cruelties they had inflicted on him; and repeat all the horrid circumstances of his murder.

Orestes at length enquires by what strange caprice Clytemnestra had been induced to send libations to the tomb of a husband whom she had murdered. They tell him, the queen had been alarmed with a horrid dream: that in her sleep she thought she saw a serpent issue from her bosom: she gave it suck, and it drew blood from her instead of milk. This short recital is extremely simple and natural. Such is the manner of the antients. It presents a lively picture in a few words. Orestes, who conceives the sense of the dream, swears to accomplish it; and for this purpose he sends Electra back to the palace, to observe all that passes there; he binds the Chorus to secrecy, and requires the assistance of his friend Pylades in the execution of his scheme. The Chorus, for the Interlude, as usual, recount those fatal amours which have been cemented by blood. This is a series of fabulous loves, put in strophies to be sung.

ACT THE THIRD.

A slave comes out of the palace: Orestes calls him, and orders him to give notice of the arrival of a stranger. Clytemnestra enters, followed by Electra. Orestes calls himself a native of Daulia, sent by Strophius to acquaint the Argives with the death of Orestes, and feigns not to know either the queen or princess. This prince, who is not known to Clytemnestra, excuses himself for being the messenger of such melancholly news to persons who honour him with the rights of hospitality. Clytemnestra receives the news without any shew of grief; and tells the pretended stranger, that it will not be less acceptable to Egisthus. She gives orders for an apartment to be prepared for the two strangers. Orestes enters the palace with Clytemnestra and Electra: which gives the Chorus hopes of success.

The old woman who nursed Orestes enters, to go in search of Egisthus by the queen's orders. "The inhuman mother, says she, "affects to be grieved; but it is with difficulty that she conceals her joy. It is for me to lament the unfortunate Orestes." And accordingly she expresses the most affecting sorrow. The character of this nurse is full of simplicity: for she gives a detail of all the cares which the infancy of Orestes had cost her. This we must attribute to the antient manners. She speaks almost word for word in the style of Phenix, in Homer, with regard to Achilles. This simplicity has been charged upon Homer as a fault, and will hardly be pardoned in Æschylus. The Chorus, to console the old woman, just hint to her, that the report of Orestes's death may be false, and propagated by design, and they prevail on her to go and deliver her message to Egisthus without delay. During this interval, the Chorus sing as usual, to occupy the stage; and their songs are only prayers for the success of Orestes. We must not omit observing, that the old woman, in this conversation with the Chorus, tells them, that she was commanded to warn Egisthus to bring his guards with him. The poet makes use of this precaution to mark the character of tyrants; who, having every thing to reproach themselves with, live always in fear, and at the same time to keep the minds of the audience in suspense, by raising this new obstacle to the designs of Orestes. But the Chorus remove it immediately, by bidding the old governess beware how she mentioned this circumstance to Egisthus; but, on the contrary, to prevail upon him to come unattended, by informing him beforehand of the good news the queen had to tell him.

ACT THE FOURTH.

Egisthus accordingly appears, attended by one man only, who had been sent to him by the two strangers. He comes to be informed of the truth of Orestes's death. He does not suffer his joy to break out, as in Sophocles: on the contrary, his cautious policy makes him declare, that he is concerned such reports are spread about; for, if they are not certain and well founded, they may produce dangerous consequences, by recalling to remembrance the death of Agamemnon: that perhaps these reports take their rise from the idle fears of women. This shews, that he was also acquainted with the news by the nurse, who had been sent from the queen. He interrogates the man who is with him; and this man refers him to the two strangers for fuller information.

Egísthús enters their apartment, while the Chorus offers up prayers for his destruction. Immediately on his entrance he is wounded by Orestes. His cries are heard upon the stage. The virgins who compose the Chorus remove to a little distance, partly through fear, and partly that they may not be thought accomplices in this action. A domestic, terrified and amazed, comes out of the palace, and by his cries declares the death of his master. The queen comes out of her apartment. He acquaints her with what had happened. "Ah!" cries Clytemnestra, "we are betrayed: we perish by a stratagem, as we have made Agamemnon perish." She asks for arms: but Orestes immediately presents himself before her. "It is thou whom I now seek," says he, "for Egísthús is punished." Clytemnestra sighs for the death of her dear Egísthús. "Barbarian!" adds Orestes, "thou lovest this husband, 'tis well; thou shalt attend him to the tomb." Clytemnestra, who in this deed discovers her son, implores his mercy, and shews him that breast which had given him suck. Orestes is staggered at this sight. "What shall I do," says he, "my dear Pylades?" Pylades confirms his wavering resolution, by reminding him of the command he had received from heaven. "Where are the Oracles of Apollo? Where are thy oaths?" "Must all thy family be contemnors of the Gods?" Orestes suppresses his tenderness, and bids the queen follow him to that apartment where the body of Egísthús lies, that she may be sacrificed upon it. "A double crime united you in life; the same destiny shall unite you in death; come and marry him once more." The discourse between the mother and son, which proceeds by quick interchanges of answers and replies, is short and spirited. It begins thus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Remember, oh! my son, that I have nourished thee, and grant me life.

ORESTES.

Thou didst murder my father, and thou would'st live with me!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It was Destiny that gave death to Agamemnon.

ORESTES.

And it is Destiny that revenges it by thine.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou serpent which I have nourished at my breast! Ah! my dream was too true.

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

Thy hand committed a parricide; die by a parricide.

It must be confessed, there is something too inhuman in this for our manners, however Eschylus may have endeavoured to soften it. The Oracle cannot justify such a deed; for still it is a son who kills his mother, and a mother Suppliant at his feet. This circumstance seems less cruel in Sophocles than in Eschylus or Euripides. The Chorus terminate this act, by singing a kind of triumphal hymn for a work of vengeance, performed, they say, by Justice herself, the daughter of Jupiter.

ACT THE FIFTH.

Orestes comes out of the palace, and orders the gates to be thrown open. He shews to the people, at a distance, the bodies of Clytemnestra and Egisthus. He shews them at the same time the robe with which they covered Agamemnon when they assassinated him, and the chains with which he was bound. "Spread this abominable robe," says he, "not to be seen by my father; but that the sun, who has beheld the blood which has been shed, may witness for me, that it is with justice I have dared to kill a mother. As for Egisthus's death, I seek not to defend that act. He has suffered a just and mild punishment for murder and adultery." The Chorus at this spectacle feel their grief and indignation renewed: but Orestes has no other fruit from his victory, than the being obliged to fly to Delphos, in obedience to the orders of Apollo. He feels already that his reason is disordered: but before the Furies begin to torment him, he takes the Argives to witness of his innocence; and leaving them to enjoy the liberty he had so lately procured them, he banishes himself far from his country. At that instant he thinks he sees the Eumenides, with serpents hissing round their heads, and eyes distilling blood. This is but the beginning of his madness; and Eschylus has only sketched it out, but with a masterly hand. Orestes does not entirely lose the use of his reason. He retires with Pylades; and the Chorus conclude the piece with lamenting the destiny of this family, among whom so many murders had been committed: they lament also the fate of Orestes, condemned to take vengeance on a mother, and to be criminal against his will.

I must not omit to observe, that the Furies by whom Orestes is tormented, and which had been called by Clytemnestra *the enraged dogs*

dogs of a mother, is a very ancient and very noble picture of that remorse which haunts the conscience of a criminal; a remorse which nature renders more poignant when it is occasioned by so horrid a crime against her as parricide. Cicero speaks excellently on this subject*. "When on the stage you see a man is represented as guilty of some impious crime, and therefore tormented by the Furies, and seized with horror at the view of their burning torches, you must not imagine that this is ever really the case. The Furies which torment the guilty wretch are his own fears. By them he is incessantly pursued, racked by his own black schemes, torn by his remorse. These are the domestic Furies which are ever inseparable from the impious. These are they who day and night revenge by dreadful but just punishments, the blood of fathers upon their parricide sons." *Nolite enim putare, quemadmodum in fabulis sæpenumero videtis, eos qui aliquid impie sceleratæque commiserint, agitari & perterreretur Furiarum tedis ardentibus. Sua quemque fraus, & suus terror maxime vexat: suum quemque scelus agitat, amentiaque afficit: suæ malæ cogitationes conscientiaque animi terrent. Hæ sunt impiis assiduæ domesticæque Furia, quæ dies noctesque parentum pœnas à consccleratissimis filiis repetunt.*

* Cicero pro Ros. amer. n. 40.

THE
ELECTRA
OF
EURIPIDES.

AFTER what has been said, it is not necessary to give this subject a farther explanation, tho' seen by the three rivals in different views. The story of Egisthus is the ground-work of all their performances: and besides, Euripides will explain it to us, in his prologue; which, like most of his others, is retrospective.

ACT THE FIRST.

A Mycenian, who lives at a small distance from Argos, is the first that enters upon the scene, and, apostrophising his country, traces back in his own mind the misfortunes of its regal family; the enterprize of Agamemnon; his expedition against Troy; his return to Argos; his murder, effected by his wife in concert with Egisthus; and the consequences of that atrocious deed. Egisthus married to Clytemnestra, and in possession of the throne, resolves to kill Orestes, the son of Agamemnon: but the young prince is secretly carried away from Argos by an old man, who gives him to the care of Strophius, king of Phocis. The tyrant at first consents that Electra shall live; but seeing her of age, and demanded in marriage by all the princes of Greece, he grows apprehensive that she will one day be in a condition to revenge her father's murder, and therefore determines to kill her. However, Clytemnestra saves her life, rather through policy than tenderness. The death of the daughter would have rendered the government of the mother too odious, and would have added new force to the resentment of Orestes, who had already set a price upon the usurper's head. "These reasons," says the man, "have determined the king to give me Electra in marriage. Noble, though poor, my
" quality

“ quality is obscured by indigence. My circumstances were such
 “ as Egisthus wished they should be. He thought there was no-
 “ thing to fear from one in so deprest a state; whereas a husband
 “ more powerful might have recalled the murder of Agamemnon
 “ to remembrance, and would not have suffered the authors to re-
 “ main unpunished.”

Euripides gives to this Mycenian the true character of a man nobly born, who in adversity preserves sentiments worthy of his birth. The poet makes a Philemon * of him, a man who resembles the virtuous husband of Baucis; a prince by the qualities of his mind, a labourer through the necessity of his fortune; reverencing the Gods, worthy to have them for his guests, the friend of justice, and the enemy of tyranny. Forced to marry the daughter of his deceased sovereign, he is made the victim of an unjust and cruel policy. He is her protector, rather than her husband; and publicly declares that his respect for the blood of his lawful king, prevails over his ambition to be the husband of a princess; and that he has always considered her as a sacred pledge which the Gods have confided to his care. Euripides takes many precautions upon this last article, but besides that this opening is not near so beautiful as that of Sophocles, which is a finished model, the imagination is a little wounded by this marriage and no marriage.

In the second scene we see a young woman, meanly drest, bearing an urn upon her head, which she is going to fill with water from the neighbouring fountain. This is Electra, who makes herself known by complaining to heaven of the cruelty of a mother who had reduced her to so deplorable a condition. Her husband meets her; and tenderly complains, that, notwithstanding all his intreaties and the orders he had given to prevent her, she would still debase herself to such vile employments, unworthy of her birth. “ I hold thee equal to the Gods,” replies Electra, “ thou
 “ whose virtuous tenderness hast respected my distress. In misfor-
 “ tunes like mine, can there be a greater alleviation than to find a
 “ friend like thee? It is to this pure, this perfect friendship that
 “ I pay homage, by employing myself thus. Alas! is it not just,
 “ that, through gratitude at least, I should share thy labours, and
 “ relieve thy cares?”

* See Ovid's Metam. b. 8. v. 632.

The husband submits to all her desires, and prepares to go and sow his field as soon as it is day; which shews the humiliating state to which Egisthus had reduced Electra, by constraining her to be the wife of a person who subsisted by the painful labour of his hands.

They retire, and Orestes and Pylades appear, (with poets these two are inseparable). The friends make themselves known to the audience by their mutual affection. Orestes declares, that he is come by the orders of Apollo to revenge the death of his father; that, favoured by the night, he had performed the sacrifices due to the dead upon the tomb of Agamemnon; and that when the day appeared it would not be difficult for him to keep upon the frontiers of Argolis, that he might be ready to withdraw, in case he should be discovered; and that he might endeavour to find out his sister's house, which he believed was not far distant. They perceive Electra, who is taking water from the fountain; and supposing her to be a slave or country girl, they retire aside a little, waiting till she should pass by, that they may draw from her some necessary informations. For this purpose they seat themselves near Electra's house without knowing it.

Electra believing herself alone, renews her complaints while she is filling her urn. These complaints are expressed in a kind of ode, which the ancients called *monodie*, or soliloquy, to be sung; which makes the interlude of the first act, as well as the following. Accordingly Electra, perceiving the Chorus, invites them to mourn with her; and, the more to engage them, she describes the death of her father, the absence or perhaps slavery of her brother, and her own misfortunes, in those spirited strokes and frequent exclamations which make the soul of the Chorusses of Euripides. The character of Electra is the same, and the soliloquy is in the same taste as in Sophocles. *Oh thou pure light! thou azure sky, which encompasseth the earth, &c.* But that of Euripides is less concise and less beautiful in our language.

Electra sets down her urn before they begin the melancholly ceremony; that is, before they pay their tribute of tears and funeral cries to Agamemnon's shade. The Chorus, which is only composed of shepherdesses and country girls, through compassion attached to the fortune of Electra, endeavour to prevent this princess from indulging her grief, by talking to her of a festival which they were going to celebrate. "She has no longer any

“ taste for feasts and dances. Joy is a stranger to her ; tears are
 “ now her only nourishment, and all the consolation she is per-
 “ mitted to have.” She bids them observe her dress, so unworthy
 of a princess of her rank, but so conformable to her misfortunes.
 Upon which the Chorus, with that simplicity which marks their
 character, offer her richer garments, and more suitable to her birth,
 to engage her to appear at their public festivals, and honour the
 Gods with her presence, to render them more propitious to her :
 for they omit no argument which they think can prevail upon
 her. “ My dear friends,” she replies, “ the Gods are become
 “ insensible to the miseries of Electra, and deaf to the cries of
 “ Agamemnon’s blood : every thing conspires to aggravate my
 “ distress ; I mourn a murdered father ; my brother still is left
 “ me ; but he, unhappy prince, either wanders in distant coun-
 “ tries, or is a slave : while I, driven from the palace of my an-
 “ cestors, and doomed to live in a miserable cottage on these
 “ dreary rocks, consume away with grief, in the view of a mo-
 “ ther who peaceably enjoys the fruit of her crime in the bed of
 “ that husband whom she massacred.”

A C T T H E S E C O N D.

Orestes and Pylades, who hear all that passes, suddenly rise from
 the place where they had sat concealed ; and the princess, terrified
 at the sight of two armed strangers, attempts to fly. But Orestes
 obliges her, notwithstanding her cries, to stop, and assures her he
 has no intention to hurt her. “ Why then these arms,” she re-
 plies, “ and why did you keep yourselves concealed so near my
 “ house ?” Electra is with reason surprised at seeing armed men
 so near her ; because the Greeks, as has been already observed,
 very seldom carried any weapons about them. The prince, to
 dissipate the terror of his sister as soon as possible, tells her, that
 he is come to bring her some certain intelligence of her brother.
 “ Oh Gods !” cries she, “ and does he still live, or is he no
 “ more.” “ He lives,” replies Orestes ; “ be happy in this news.”
 If we recollect the turn Sophocles has given to this interview be-
 tween the brother and sister, we must acknowledge, that Euripides
 has not been near so happy in this scene. Yet it is interesting :
 for Orestes, who still passes for a stranger, relates to his sister all
 his adventures and the consequences of his exile. She tells him,
 that she is married to a man whose fortune is greatly inferior to

her rank, but whose generosity is more than equal to it; that this virtuous friend had always treated her like a sister, as well through his reverence for the royal race, from which she was descended, as that he might not be the minister of the barbarous policy of Egisthus; that the tyrant, deceived by the specious veil of a marriage which he supposed real, enjoyed the pleasure of beholding her reduced to this humiliating condition, which rendered her contemptible, and left him nothing to fear from her posterity: and adds, that the friends she had made in this retirement (she speaks of the Chorus) are her confidants, faithful to the memory of Agamemnon, and enemies to the usurper and her husband; but that none but Orestes is able to overthrow the tyranny.

"Hast thou courage enough," resumes Orestes, "to assist in killing thy mother?" "I have enough," replies she, "to murder her with that very steel with which she murdered her husband." "May I assure Orestes," says he, "that thy resolution is fixed?" "I am content to die," she answers, "when I have given death to this inhuman mother."

This is barbarous, as M. Dacier justly observes; and certainly Preface to Electra. Euripides likewise uses Electra. a little artifice to suspend the discovery of the brother to his sister, by making Electra say, that she should not know her brother if she saw him, without the assistance of the old man who carried him privately from Argos. Thus this discovery is not brought about in the second act (as M. Dacier says), but in the third, as we shall see presently. For here, Orestes, the better to support the character of a stranger which he had assumed, asks his sister what message she will send by him to a brother so tenderly beloved? "Recount my miseries and his own to him," she replies. We have already seen a detail of their miseries, which she repeats in a manner still more animated; for she paints in the most lively colours the wretched condition to which the tyrant had reduced her. She expatiates upon her rustic habit, her hands inured to labour, her continual grief, which banishes her from assemblies, festivals, and sacrifices, and which condemns her to an obscure and miserable solitude. To this she opposes the felicity of Clytemnestra; which, though guilty, is peaceably enjoyed. She describes her as seated on the throne in Phrygian magnificence, surrounded by her faithful foreigners, the slaves of Agamemnon, amidst the lustre of a splendid and haughty court, while the blood of Agamemnon dries unrevenged upon the walls of the

palace, with which they are stained. And, lastly, she represents Egisthus insolently riding in the same chariot in which Agamemnon used to appear with such real dignity, holding in his perfidious hand the sceptre which he had dipped in the blood of that great monarch, whose manes and whose tomb he daily insulted.

The Chorus in the mean time perceive the husband of Electra, who is just returned from the field, and who seems surprised at first to behold the princess in so familiar a conversation with two men. Electra instantly removes his scruples, which are founded on the nice delicacy of the antients. The labourer being informed that Orestes is still alive, expresses his joy for the good news, and offers the two travellers all the dues of hospitality. He intreats them to enter his cottage, which is ready to afford them the best welcome his poverty will permit. He is concerned this offer had not been made them sooner. He orders his servants to take care of their baggage, intreating them at the same time not to disdain his offers. He is a Philemon, who receives the Gods under his humble roof.

Orestes, equally surprised and pleased to find in a man of his low condition sentiments which are often vainly sought for in persons of a more elevated rank, draws a fine though tedious moral from the caprice of fortune, which sometimes in princes conceals base and degenerate minds, and to common men gives the most noble and heroic qualities. But Electra, ashamed to receive the illustrious strangers in a cottage destitute of all conveniencies, sends her husband to the old Governor, who had saved the life of Orestes, with a request that he would provide an entertainment less unworthy of them. The labourer consents to his wife's proposal, only because it is hers; but adds, that even his indigence will afford him the means of treating his guests for one day at least; for he holds that for a rich repast which Philemon gave to the two Deities Jupiter and Mercury, who were his guests, an open countenance, and a liberal heart;

“ * Super omnia vultus

“ Accessere boni, nec iners pauperque voluntas.”

His reflexion however as he goes out is, that the rich and happy enjoy a great advantage in being able to serve their friends, and to provide for extraordinary occasions. For, as for common ones,

* Ovid's Metam. b. 8. v. 631.

abundance he thinks is unnecessary, according to that maxim which Horace has since translated, speaking of a rich man :

“ * Non tuus hic capiet venter plusquam meus.”

The stomach of the rich is not larger than that of the poor. These maxims of a man, contented with poverty, and who envies the great only for the pleasure they must enjoy in making others happy, completes the engaging picture of a truly virtuous man.

The Interlude of the Chorus seems a little detached from the subject. It is at least a Pindaric digression. For in it the Chorus apostrophise the thousand vessels that sailed to Troy ; they expatiate upon the glory of Achilles ; they speak of his shield in the same manner as Homer ; they describe the principal figures with which the art of Vulcan had adorned it ; they represent Achilles upon a rapid chariot, covered with clouds of dust, and carrying terror and death among the Trojan ranks. Lastly, they conclude with some expressions of indignation against Clytemnestra, whose impious hand had murdered the chief of such heroes and the monarch of so many kings ; and foretel the vengeance that must necessarily follow a crime so horrible ; for this is the point aimed at, as by Pindar in his Odes.

ACT THE THIRD.

The good old man who had brought up Agamemnon and his children arrives, bending under the weight of years. He knocks at Electra's door, not without expressions of grief that a miserable cottage should hold the place of a palace to a princess. As soon as she appears he accosts her respectfully, presents her a lamb (which he has chosen from amongst his flock), flowers to strew the table, a pitcher of exquisite wine, some cheeses ; in a word, a mere rustic repast for her new guests. He causes these presents to be carried into the cottage. He then wipes his eyes ; for the sight of a princess in such extreme poverty, and the striking contrast there was between the situation in which he found her, and that in which he had formerly seen her, had awakened ideas which melted him to tears. He speaks and acts like the *foster-fathers* of the Greek princes, and with all the simplicity of the *good antient times*.

After this first conversation he tells her, that he was just come from the tomb of Agamemnon, where he had renewed his tribute

* Horace. Sat. 1. b. 1. v. 48.

of tears, and poured a libation of wine: but that he had been greatly astonished at what he saw there. Some locks of hair were spread upon the tomb, a black sheep, whose blood was newly shed, lay by it, and all the other marks of a recent sacrifice appeared. We have already given a translation of this scene; which is maliciously designed by Euripides to ridicule the discovery of Orestes as managed by Eschylus. Electra refutes all the old man's arguments, who will have it, that it was Orestes who had come there to honour the manes of his father. This scene, independent of the satire in it, which is misplaced, is yet agreeably connected with the whole piece, and helps to keep up that suspension which Euripides intends it should.

Orestes now comes out of the cottage, and shews himself to the old man, while he is asking Electra some questions concerning him. The astonished Governor gazes on him in silence, and seems to devour him with his eyes. "Invoke the Gods, Electra," cries he immediately, "and look at thy guest. It is Orestes." This is not easily credited. He insists upon it; and at length shews an undoubted proof, which is a mark the prince received upon his forehead while he was a child and running after a fawn with his sister. This is copied from Homer.

Electra, convinced by this mark, and by the testimony of the old man, instantly embraces her brother. The first transports at this discovery are well touched: but it is less striking and less animated than that of Eschylus, which Euripides has made the subject of his raillery. But Sophocles has the advantage of them both, by supposing that Orestes was believed to be dead, who on a sudden is known to be alive, that Electra may in an instant pass from extreme distress to the highest transports of joy.

Euripides gives very lively sentiments to the Chorus upon the return of Orestes; but the prince, without attending to these useless expressions of affection, begins to consult the Governor upon the means of revenging Agamemnon. "Have we any friends remaining?" says he, "or are they all as deprest as our fortune? What resolution shall I take? Shall I attempt this enterprize by stratagem, or by open force? In a word, what course shall I pursue, in order to punish my enemies?"

"My son," replies the old man, "I will not flatter thee with ill-grounded hopes. Thou art unfortunate; therefore thou hast no friends. A friend, who in good and bad fortune continues always the same, is a treasure seldom to be found. Besides, at
" thy

" thy departure, no ray of hope was left, thy party is dispersed.
 " Know then, that to regain the throne of thy ancestors, thou
 " hast no resource but in thy own valour and the assistance of
 " the Gods."

O R E S T E S.

What is to be done to secure success?

O L D M A N.

Thou must kill Clytemnestra and Egisthus.

O R E S T E S.

It is to this glory that I aspire. But how is it to be attained?

O L D M A N.

Thou must gain access into the palace: but courage alone is not sufficient.

O R E S T E S.

I understand thee. The city is well guarded, and centinels watch continually.

O L D M A N.

This is but too true. Egisthus fears thee, and is attentive to every thing that concerns thee.

In this perplexity a thought comes into the old man's head. As he was coming to Electra's cottage he met Egisthus, who was preparing to offer a great sacrifice and celebrate a festival. (It is this festival which the Chorus had mentioned to Electra.) The tyrant, he says, was attended only by a few domestics, who would yield without resistance to their lawful king. He therefore advises Orestes to go to the place where the sacrifice was to be performed; that Egisthus would certainly, as he appeared to be a stranger, invite him to the ceremony. Then, continues he, circumstances will instruct thee what to do. Orestes, judging it impossible to kill Egisthus and Clytemnestra at the same time, is doubtful and perplexed how to act. For if one of them escapes, his attempt will be rendered dangerous, and his vengeance fruitless. But Electra removes this difficulty, and takes upon herself the care of dispatching her mother. A horrible design; and still more so in the sister than the brother. For Electra contrives a treacherous scheme to draw Clytemnestra into the snare. She is to pretend that she has been delivered of a child ten days before. "If Clytemnestra visits me," adds she, "her death is sure."

When

When this consultation is over, the old Governor prepares to conduct Orestes to the place where the sacrifice is to be performed, and to spread the report of Electra's being brought to bed. But the brother and sister before they separate, implore the assistance of Jupiter and Juno, and of the shade of their father, and conjure them to favour their just revenge. Electra appears most transported with rage: for she declares, that if Orestes fails in his attempt upon the life of Egisthus, she will plunge a poinard in her own bosom. Accordingly she retires, to arm herself, and wait concealed for the arrival of Clytemnestra.

The Interlude of this act seems to have as little connexion with the subject as the former, although the design of the Chorus is to represent the origin of those misfortunes which attend the house of Pelops, from which Agamemnon and Egisthus were descended, the former being the son of Atreus, the latter of Thyestes. The Chorus repeat the fable of the golden fleece, which was the cause of the horrid discord between Atreus and Thyestes. For Atreus, jealous of a treasure upon which the fate of his dominions depended, when he found that it was stolen from him by means of Ærope, who doubly betrayed her husband, he revenged himself on Thyestes for this injury, by killing his son, and causing his mangled limbs to be served up to him at table. This execrable feast, which made the sun recoil with horror, was the source of all those miseries with which from that time the race of Pelops had been overwhelmed. The verses sung by the Chorus form a beautiful and noble image of the sun's flight, the horror of the stars, and the confusion of the elements: "A visible punishment inflicted by Jupiter, and an eloquent lesson (add the Chorus), by which mortals are taught to reverence the Gods: but a lesson by which the barbarous Clytemnestra has not profited."

A C T T H E F O U R T H.

"What noise is this which strikes my ear? (says a woman of the Chorus suddenly.) Is it the thunder of the infernal Jupiter? No: the cries resound from every side. Come forth, Electra, come forth." Electra hears the tumult of a fight; and fear being a melancholly interpreter, she supposes Orestes has been oppressed by numbers, and that the conspiracy is blasted. Full of this thought she resolves to die, and she is confirmed in her resolution, because no person has been sent to her by Orestes with
news

news of his success. But the Chorus prevent the blow, and at the same instant shew her a domestic belonging to the prince, who declares that Orestes has conquered, and that the usurper lies expiring. The terror and doubts with which the mind of Electra is filled, hinder her at first from knowing this servant: but when her spirits are composed, she recollects him, and makes him repeat the happy tidings. The officer relates the whole transaction to her nearly in the following manner:

“ When we came to the place where the tyrant was, we found
 “ him walking alone in a garden, gathering branches of myrtle, to
 “ crown the guests. When he perceived us, strangers, said he, who
 “ are you? What is your country? We are Thessalians, replied
 “ Orestes, and are going to sacrifice to Jupiter Olympus, upon the
 “ the banks of the Alpheus. Well, answered Egisthus, I invite
 “ you to the feast which I shall give after I have offered a sacrifice
 “ to the Nymphs. You may go thither to-morrow. But in the
 “ mean time, added he, presenting his hand to us, let us enter
 “ the palace. I will order baths to be prepared for you, that you
 “ may be in a condition to approach the altar. Orestes answered,
 “ that he was already purified. Immediately all things were pre-
 “ pared for the sacrifice. The victims were led to the altar; the
 “ baskets were brought; the sacred fire was kindled, and basons
 “ were placed round the pile. The whole palace was in motion.
 “ Egisthus while he threw cakes upon the altar pronounced these
 “ words: Ye Nymphs who inhabit the rocks, grant that I may
 “ often enjoy the privilege of offering you such sacrifices. Continue
 “ your favourable protection to Clytemnestra and to me; and may
 “ your curses fall at length upon our enemies.” By those he meant
 Orestes and the princess. It may be well imagined, as the Officer
 says, that Orestes put up a different petition. In the same sacrifice
 very opposite prayers were offered to heaven, and the Gods were now
 to decide between the usurper and the lawful heir to the throne.

Egisthus, who little suspected that this prince was so near him, after having sacrificed an heifer, intreated him to examine the entrails of the victim. This art the Thessalians particularly excelled in, and Orestes passed for a Thessalian. The prince immediately complied with his request. But Egisthus at the sight of the entrails was struck with terror, as if in them he had read his fate. (This insensibly leads to the event.) Orestes in his turn sacrifices a victim; and, seeing that Egisthus was employed in examining the still beating heart of the bull, he with the same knife strikes the usurper

dead. The guards attack the prince, who, seconded by Pylades, makes a brave defence. At length he tells them that he is Orestes. "I am not come," says he, "to wage war against the people of Argos, nor against you, who are my subjects. I am Orestes, and I am come to revenge the murder of my father." At these words the guards drop their weapons from their hands. An old man advances: he knows the prince again: they crown him instantly, and joy succeeds to their late rage. In a word, he comes to bring to his sister not the head of Medusa, but of an enemy more horrible to her.

The Chorus animate each other, to celebrate this triumph with songs and dances; while Electra, whose wishes are now accomplished, addresses herself in rapturous exclamations to the sun, the night, and the earth. She is eager to crown her brother with her own hands. She re-enters her cottage to seek for one. The Chorus continue their songs, or rather their shouts of victory. Orestes and Pylades that instant appear. Electra comes out, and binds wreaths round the heads of the two conquerors. But Orestes, without arrogating to himself any merit from the happy success of his enterprize, replies to the praises his sister gives him, with great modesty and decorum: "Electra (says he) let thy homage be first paid to the Gods, who are the authors of this great victory. Look upon us only as the ministers of their will, and of the design of fortune. The usurper is dead; behold his body. It is now in thy power to dispose of thy tyrant." For, he adds, according to the usage of the antients, that he abandons this carcase to his sister's vengeance, who may give it as a prey to the birds and savage beasts: a sentiment which shocks our manners. It is true indeed, that Electra shews some * reluctance to insult the dead: a circumstance which would seem to condemn what Sophocles makes her say upon the same occasion, if Electra's motive for this forbearance was not the fear of incurring the indignation of the people. However, this fear, after all, shews us, that the extravagant vengeance which extended to the dead was not generally approved among the Greeks. Electra contents herself with using the harshest language imaginable to her tyrant, dead as he is. She reproaches him in a long speech with all she had suffered from his cruelty, besides the murder of Agamemnon and his marriage with Clytemnestra. There is in this speech a

* The Electra of Sophocles, Act fifth, Scene the last.

great deal of fine morality and many strokes of satire, and among others upon the effeminacy and mean condescension of Egisthus, which rendered him the slave, rather than the husband of Clytemnestra. Whatever beauty there may be found in these satirical strokes, which paint the manners of the Greeks, it is certain that a formal harangue addressed to a dead enemy is too little in our taste to be endured.

Orestes orders his servants to carry the body of Egisthus into Electra's house, that Clytemnestra may not see it upon her arrival. This is done very seasonably; for Electra makes a sign to her brother to speak no more upon that subject, and she herself changes the discourse immediately, because she sees at a distance her mother's chariot, which approaches slowly. Here I think there is a very palpable error; for is it probable, that Egisthus could have been murdered publicly at the ceremony of a sacrifice and Clytemnestra be ignorant of what had happened? Even Orestes and Electra seem to have forgot this, and are so intoxicated with their joy for the usurper's death, that they never think of his wife's being alive, and in a condition to revenge it. And why indeed did she not come sooner? It was less difficult to get rid of her than Egisthus. But Euripides was willing to close all with her death, to increase the tragic passion as his poem proceeds; and this I believe is the only reason that can be assigned for his failing in probability.

Orestes, at the approach of his mother, feels the same remorse as Cinna in Corneille.

What are we going to do? (says he.) Shall we dip our hands in the blood of our mother?

ELECTRA.

Would thy weak compassion then preserve her life?

ORESTES.

How can I murder her from whom I received my birth, whose tender cares sustained my infancy?

ELECTRA.

Even as she murdered thy father and mine.

ORESTES.

Oh Phœbus! how unjust are thy Oracles?

Bb 2

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Who can be just if Apollo is not?

ORESTES.

Thou commandest me to kill a mother, and nature forbids me to obey.

ELECTRA.

Can it be criminal to revenge a father?

ORESTES.

Shall the innocent Orestes become a parricide?

ELECTRA.

Wilt thou cease to be virtuous, by revenging Agamemnon?

ORESTES.

If I revenge him by shedding the blood of Clytemnestra, I shall be punished.

ELECTRA.

To whom then wilt thou commit the care of revenging the king?

ORESTES.

Ah! if it should be some malignant Demon who has deceived me under the name of a God!

ELECTRA.

Do not think so. The sacred tripod pronounces nothing but the Oracles of Heaven.

ORESTES.

I cannot prove this Oracle to be true.

ELECTRA.

Can't thou endure to be reproached with cowardice?

ORESTES.

Well then I must resolve -----

ELECTRA.

That she shall fall into the same snare as Egisthus has done?

ORESTES.

Let us go in. I am upon the point of committing an horrid deed, an execrable crime against all nature: but the Gods will have it so.

The

The lot is cast. Oh ! pleasing moment for the father, who is revenged ; but too, too cruel for the son, who revenges him.

Whatever horror is inspired by this scene, the remorse of Orestes is managed with great art, and raises the same ideas in the mind of the spectator which Cinna expresses upon his own remorse.

* “ On ne les sent aussi que quand le coup approche,
“ Et l’on ne reconnoît de semblables forfaits,” &c.

The Chorus accost the queen Clytemnestra ; and, being accomplices in the conspiracy, make her a compliment alike treacherous and flattering. Euripides represents this queen in a chariot, as in the Iphigenia in Aulis. She orders her Trojan slaves who attend her to descend first, that she may lean upon their arms. But Electra prevents her by these words : “ I am, like them, a slave, “ banished from the house of my father. Suffer me then, oh ! “ queen, to offer thee my hand, and perform their office.”

The queen being unwilling to receive this servile assistance from her, her daughter still comparing herself to the Trojan captives, asks her, “ Why then was she treated like a slave ? For our fortune is equal, says she. Deprived, like them, of a father, I “ am used as a captive.”

Clytemnestra being obliged to justify herself, does it in the same manner as in Sophocles ; that is, by very bad arguments, and an enumeration of the pretended crimes of Agamemnon, the punishment of which must necessarily fall upon Electra. The princess seeing herself even invited by her mother to speak her sentiments freely, does so with all the strength and eloquence she is mistress of. But this scene, so like that of Sophocles in the subject, is far inferior to it in the turn and manner, as will be readily allowed by comparing them together. I shall not translate this of Euripides, on account of the resemblance, which is very strong. However, he puts some things into the mouth of Electra which Sophocles omitted : for example, the princess reproaches her mother with killing the king, not so much to revenge the death of Iphigenia, a trifling pretence and easily refuted, as to be at liberty to marry her lover ; since, after the departure of Agamemnon for Troy, and before there was any design of sacrificing Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, during the absence of her husband, affected to appear beautiful,

and to heighten her charms with all the ornaments of dress; a certain indication of infidelity among the Greeks. "Yet more," adds Electra, "from whence proceeded that criminal joy which thou, and thou only, didst discover when the news came to Argos of any advantage gained by the Trojans, and that sadness so plainly expressed in thy countenance at the recital of our victories, but from the fears of seeing again too soon, a husband, who was become hateful to thee?"

Clytemnestra, too hard pressed by such forceable arguments, affects great moderation, and even confesses that she is grieved for what is passed, and that she pardons her daughter for being in the interest of a father rather than in hers. She then breaks off this discourse, and mentions Electra's lying-in, expressing some concern for the miserable condition to which she sees her reduced. She even suffers some sighs to escape her secretly, and reproaches herself for the afflictions she had been the cause of to her daughter. "It is too late to lament my miseries," replies the princess, "when thou seest them irremediable. But why dost thou not at least recal thy son Orestes?" Clytemnestra acknowledges that she suffered him to remain in banishment, through an apprehension of finding an irreconcilable enemy in him. The conversation then turns upon Egisthus; and Electra on this subject drops these equivocal words, "The haughty tyrant dwells in my house." By which she would have her mother understand, that he is possessed of the palace of her ancestors, while her meaning is, that the body of Egisthus lies extended in her cottage. The queen at length breaks off a conversation which grows displeasing to her, and her daughter prevails upon her to enter her cottage, to perform there the accustomed sacrifice on the tenth day after the birth of a child. Clytemnestra consents, and thus falls into the snare that is laid for her. She even sends back her chariot and her attendants, with orders not to return till the sacrifice is over. This precaution was necessary, to the end that Orestes and Electra might meet with no opposition in their attempt upon the life of their mother. We cannot help being again surprised that the queen should not be informed of Egisthus's death, the report of which could not fail of spreading over the whole city. It is true indeed, that Euripides partly obviates this objection, by supposing that Egisthus was at a considerable distance from Argos, and that at the very moment he was murdered Clytemnestra had departed from the city by another road to visit Electra. But how then did it happen,

pen, that she did not arrive at the house of Electra before Orestes? There is in all this, more contrivance and less probability, than in the whole simple disposition of Sophocles' fable. For in his tragedy Clytemnestra is killed during the absence of Egisthus, and the report of this action had not spread further than the palace of which Orestes had made himself master: and afterwards Egisthus, returning from a journey, as he was expected, falls into the hands of his enemy. This is certainly more natural, than to suppose that Egisthus was killed at a sacrifice, in the midst of his guards and domestics, and that Clytemnestra was drawn into a snare not very artfully laid. In effect, Electra's lying-in is not less improbable. How can it be supposed that the queen her mother was ignorant of her daughter's being with child, and of the birth of a grandson? And upon what foundation was Electra so certain that her mother would have the complaisance to come to her cabin as soon as she was requested to come? And yet, if any one of these measures had been broke, the secret was discovered, and the whole conspiracy destroyed. It is plain, that Euripides was desirous of giving more grandeur and solemnity to the enterprize of Orestes against Egisthus, by chusing a day set apart for a sacred ceremony, a pompous sacrifice, and a sacrificer of such dignity who was himself to be the victim, in the midst of his court and surrounded by his subjects. But it is this which renders the machine too perplexed and its springs too complicated. Many other observations might be made upon the parallel of these two pieces of Euripides and Sophocles: but, independent of these observations, a single reading of each, is sufficient to shew, that the Electra of the latter is greatly preferable to that of the former poet; and were the learned to judge of this tragedy by the conduct of it, they would conclude it was not the production of Euripides, although the style of it is too like his to leave it doubtful.

Clytemnestra, followed by Electra, has scarcely entered the cottage, when the Chorus, who are accomplices in the conspiracy, enjoy before-hand the vengeance they expect; and, that the audience may not be softened to compassion by the horrors of her fate, they paint in the strongest colours the murder of her former husband by her own hand: "An atrocious crime," say they, "for which she is going to receive the just reward, by a stroke like that which she gave him." This is the law of retaliation, justifiable in the opinions of all the Greeks.

This:

This short reflexion is followed by a confused noise, which they hear in the cottage. Clytemnestra cries, "Ah! my children, will you murder your mother?" Even the Chorus, melted by these cries, and afterwards beholding the brother and sister come out reeking with the blood of their mother, lament the horrible deeds which blot the history of the house of Tantalus.

A C T T H E F I F T H.

"O earth! oh Jupiter! whose eyes see all that passes here below, behold these lifeless bodies. I have revenged my injuries and misfortunes by an execrable deed." Thus it is that Orestes speaks after he has committed the crime of parricide. Yet it would have been more natural to have suffered him to enjoy, for a few moments at least, the fruits of that crime, before he was delivered up to his remorse. The veil which passion spreads before the eyes of a criminal falls not off immediately; or, if it should, the soul, still supported by the remains of that rage which hardened it to guilt, struggles against repentance, and endeavours to stifle or at least to suppress it for a time, that it may taste the pleasure of gratified revenge. All that can be said in favour of the Orestes of Euripides is, that he was prevailed upon to kill his mother less through passion than his regard for the Oracle, and the fear of being branded with weakness: for this is the last argument Electra makes use of to confirm Orestes, staggered by frequent returns of remorse at the view of the crime he was going to commit. But that Electra should express the same sentiments of horror as her brother, and be delivered up like him to all the tortures of unavailing repentance, is what we had less reason to expect. There was something great in a woman's arming Orestes, confirming his wavering resolution, animating his rage, and piquing his pride by the reproach of weakness. Emilia behaves in the same manner with regard to Cinna. But when the deed is performed, is it credible that she should immediately falsify her character, and change her unshaken fortitude into weakness? After all, if we suppose that the eyes of these two criminals were opened on a sudden when their revenge and their false duty were satisfied, nothing was ever better touched than their repentance. Their grief is as poignant as it is useless; their rage is now extinguished, reason resumes its rights, and their hearts are torn with remorse. The respectable name of mother, which could not stop their fury, returns incessantly

cessantly to their minds, and dwells upon their tongues. "They
 " hate the light, they know not whither they shall henceforth
 " direct their steps, nor where they shall conceal the shame which
 " haunts them. What asylum shall they find? What mortal
 " will have the impiety to converse with them, and receive them
 " under their roof?"

Orestes, as it is usual with the guilty, charges Apollo with his
 crime, by whom he was armed, and Electra, by whom he was
 determined. "It was thou, inhuman sister," says he, "who forced
 " me, reluctant as I was, to murder a mother. Alas! thou saw'st
 " her bare her bosom and throw herself at our feet, while with
 " one hand holding her dishevelled hair-----"

ELECTRA.

Oh! I confess it: and her cries softened thee.

ORESTES.

My dear son, said she, embracing my knees, thy mother implores:
 thee to spare her life. This sight, these words almost disarmed
 my rage.

CHORUS to *Electra*.

Inhuman! could'st thou unmoved behold a mother expiring at
 thy feet?

ORESTES.

Alas! I was not able to kill her, till I had veiled my face with
 my robe.

ELECTRA.

Wretch that I am! it was I who animated thee to this crime:
 it was I who, by thy hands and by my own, plunged the dagger
 into her bosom.

CHORUS.

Oh horror! but haste, cover her body: let not the eye of hea-
 ven behold the wounds with which thou hast pierced it.

The Chorus follow the character of the common people, whose
 rage and hatred are changed into compassion when the criminal
 has suffered punishment. While Orestes and Electra are em-
 ployed in covering the body of their mother, Castor and Pollux
 descend in a machine; and the former, addressing himself to Orestes,
 tells him, that Clytemnestra deserved death, but that she ought
 not to have received it from a son. He allows, that the Oracle of

Phœbus was unjust; yet destiny obliged him to approve of it. He acquaints the brother and sister with what the Fates and Jupiter had decreed for them. Pylades is to marry Electra, and take her with him to his dominions in Phocis, together with the labourer who had held the place of a father to her under the name of a husband. As for Orestes, he is doomed to renounce his country; to wander from kingdom to kingdom, always haunted by the Furies; to give his name to a city of Arcadia, the place of his banishment; to go to Athens, to implore Pallas to suffer the sentence of the Areopagus to return absolved, and delivered from the persecutions of the Eumenides, and at length to reign peaceably in Argos. The bodies of Egisthus and Clytemnestra are buried; the former by the Argives, the latter by Menelaus and Helen. Euripides adopts here the fable of Helen in Egypt, whither he pretends this princess was conveyed, "while her phantom was in Troy, by Jupiter's orders, to excite those wars among mortals which were to cost so much blood." We shall see this history at length in the other plays of Euripides, in the second part of this work, as also the judgment of the Areopagus concerning Orestes.

The Chorus ask leave of the Twin-Deities to speak: they represent to them, that, they being the brothers of Clytemnestra and the children of Leda as well as her, they might certainly have prevented her from suffering so horrid a death. This observation is natural enough; but the Gods reply, that destiny and the imprudent Oracle of Apollo would not permit them. Destiny in the Grecian system solves every thing: but for this, Castor and Pollux would have been greatly perplexed in what manner to answer Electra, who had no Oracle to plead in her justification. But destiny comes to their assistance: it was destiny which rendered the parricide common to the brother and the sister: a strange moral for Gods to inculcate!

The remainder of the scene is taken up with the tender grief of Orestes and Electra at parting, who, after so long an absence, are met only to be again separated. "Alas! my dearest sister," says Orestes, "we must part again. After so long a separation I have seen thee but for a few moments: thou leavest me, and I must abandon thee."

Castor, to console him, puts him in mind that Electra has now a husband suitable to her birth; and adds, that after all, his sister's punishment is nothing more than being banished from her country.

"Alas!"

"Alas!" cries Orestes, "and what punishment can be more severe than to be banished from one's native land! Yet it is certain my destiny is more terrible: it is not confined to exile. It drags me before a foreign tribunal." They comfort him again by assuring him he may depend upon the favour and protection of Pallas. Electra then embraces her brother, in order to separate. "Receive," says Orestes to her, "these last marks of my tenderness, and look upon me as one dead."

This speech, which to a certain commentator appears cold and inconsistent with the character of a hero, yet moves the Gods who are present: and Orestes adds, sighing, "Electra, I shall never see thee more." This the commentator did not attend to. After this last farewell, tenderly repeated, Orestes recommends his sister to Pylades, who has not yet spoke, and who goes off the stage, as M. Dacier says, *without uttering a single word*. But not as he adds, *because this prince was but ill satisfied with having a woman of Electra's character*, but because Euripides did not think that a person who had been inactive almost through the whole piece, should speak on occasions where it was not absolutely necessary. He had the example of Eschylus to plead; who, in his *Cœphoræ*, makes Pylades say very little: and the antient tragic poets in general make mutes of children and all those persons who are rather introduced for shew, than for any use they are of in the action. It is certain that Pylades has scarce any business here, but is only brought in to fill the scene, and to comply with that common notion, that Orestes and Pylades were inseparable. (Racine has profited by this rule in his *Andromache*.) If Pylades seconds Orestes in his attempt upon Egisthus, this passes behind the scenes. Every where else he is only a witness, like the persons who compose the Chorus; one of whom speaks for all the rest. With respect to the present the Gods bestowed upon him, by giving him Electra in marriage, a sign only, without speaking, was sufficient to express his acknowledgments. Besides, he had too much reverence for a Divinity to interrupt him his discourse. If he says nothing to Electra, it is because she is not in a condition to listen to the professions of love: neither the time nor place are proper for such conversation; and all this is supposed to pass behind the scene when the piece is concluded: therefore Dacier's objection is very ill founded. Nor is it easy to conceive why he pronounces the parting of Orestes and Electra to be cold and unaffecting, unless it is upon the authority of the commentator before-mentioned.

But, without having any regard to the conciseness of their speeches on this occasion, we cannot but acknowledge that there is a great deal of nature and tenderness in them. What more could be said by a brother and sister whom fortune, after an absence of so many years brought together again, and again separated in so surprising a manner in one day?

Castor concludes with a speech which absolutely justifies Euripides from the reproach cast upon him by M. Dacier. For when Orestes recommends his sister to Pylades, Castor answers for the latter: "Leave to them," says he, "the care of their loves; and be thy attention wholly employed on the means of delivering thyself from the Furies, who are preparing to possess thee. These gloomy Divinities advance with large strides, armed with serpents and tormenting griefs, the melancholly consequences of guilt." After this Castor adds, "that Pollux and he are going to cross the main to the Sicilian seas, to succour such vessels as are tost by tempests. Yet their assistance," they say, "is reserved only for mortals who fear the Gods, and not for the impious." And, lastly, "they recommend to them the love of justice, and advise them never to embark with the perjured."

This system of fatality which prevailed in these three tragedies, and which in that of Euripides is authorized by the Gods, hinders not Orestes from being punished by Furies, and Electra by banishment; for the Greeks reconciled this doctrine with that of a kind of free-will, ill understood. Cicero, in his book of Fate, explains the different notions upon which this system is founded, and refutes them all. By the manner in which he exposes the opinion of the Stoics, it appears, that these philosophers expressed themselves ill; and that at the bottom they adopted that universal notion of free-will which they durst not and could not deny. They discerned a chain of causes principal and not principal, which, say they, necessarily lead to actions free or imposed: an unintelligible sentiment, but very favourable to self-love, which only seeks excuse for its faults, or consolation in its misfortunes.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES:

A

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.

PHILOCTETES:

A



TRAGEDY OF PHILOCTETES

The S U B J E C T.

PHILOCTETES, the son of Pœan and the companion of Hercules, to whom at his death he bequeathed his arrows, having followed the Greeks in the expedition against Troy *, was wounded in the foot by a serpent during the voyage †. The army, believing he was struck by the hand of the Gods, obliged Ulysses to conduct him to the isle of Lemnos, and leave him there while he was asleep. Philoctetes continued ten years ‡ in this solitary place, a prey to grief, pain, and resentment. But the Greeks being informed by an Oracle, that Troy could never be taken unless they had the arrows of Hercules, they sent Ulysses and the son of Achilles to Lemnos, with orders to bring Philoctetes to the siege, on any conditions whatever. The subject therefore is an important affair of state, although in appearance it relates only to the arrows of Hercules; and this little piece of antiquity was by the late Archbishop of Cambray thought so interesting, that it forms a very considerable episode in his Telemachus. It was this which Book 1, induced me to translate the whole tragedy; and in some places I have made use of his translation, where I found he had exactly followed the text. Happy, if in all the rest I have been able to imitate this excellent author, by infusing into our language the elegance and simplicity of the original beauties.

* Troy, a city of Phrygia, in Asia Minor, too well known to need any farther mention here.

† In the island of Chrysa, in the Ægean sea, near the great Isle of Candia, towards the coast of Oeteocretes.

‡ See a dissertation written by M. Fourmont against the common opinion of the duration of the siege of Troy, book v. of the History of the Academy of Inscript. p. 53, and the defence of the common opinion by the Abbé Benier, vol. vi. p. 425.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ULYSSES, King of Ithaca.

NEOPTOLEMUS, the son of Achillès.

PHILOCTETES, the son of Pœan, and companion
of Hercules.

A Spy.

HERCULES.

The **CHORUS**, composed of the companions of Ulysses and
Neoptolemus.

The **SCENE** is at Lemnos, near the Cave of Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES:

A

TRAGEDY OF SOPHOCLES.

A C T the F I R S T.

SCENE the F I R S T.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, a Greek Soldier.

U L Y S S E S.

AT length we behold the shore of Lemnos*. It was here, oh, son of Achilles! it was in this desert isle that, by order of the assembled Greeks, I left the miserable Philoctetes. The wound which consumed him, like a devouring fire, forced from him horrid cries. The camp incessantly resounded either with his groans, or those imprecations which he uttered in the violence of his torture. The sacrifices were disturbed.---- But why do I repeat all this to thee? The time we lose in this discourse will betray me; and the stratagem I have contrived to bring Philoctetes away with us, will certainly fail, if he discovers my arrival in his island. Thou, Neoptolemus, must assist my design. Look round for the cave, which serves him for a retreat. Thou wilt know it by these marks: it is open on both sides; so that in winter it gives a double entrance to the rays of the sun, and during the fervid heats of summer, the soft breathings of the winds invite repose. On the left, and a little below it, is a spring of pure water. Go softly towards this cave, and let me know whether Philoctetes be within it. I will at leisure unfold to thee the mystery of our enterprize, and we will unite our endeavours to succeed in the execution of it.

* An island of the Archipelago, or the Ægean sea, now called Stalimene.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

It is not difficult for me, Ulysses, to satisfy thy first demand. I believe I have already found the cave thou speakest of.

U L Y S S E S.

On what side is it?

NEOPTOLEMUS, *advancing towards a corner of the stage.*

Here it is; but I perceive no sign of any man being here.

U L Y S S E S.

Enter. Perhaps he has resigned himself to sleep.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I see nothing but an uninhabited cave.

U L Y S S E S.

Are there no tokens from whence thou can'st collect that it is not always deserted?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Here is a place strewed with leaves, a rural bed as it should seem.

U L Y S S E S.

Dost thou observe nothing more?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Yes; here is a cup of very coarse workmanship, and some dry branches of trees.

U L Y S S E S.

Those are all his treasures.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Oh heaven! what piercing misery! I perceive also some bloody rags.

U L Y S S E S.

We are right; this is his asylum, and he is not far distant. His wound will not permit him to wander far from his cave. Doubtless he is gone to seek food, or some salutary herbs to relieve his anguish. Order this soldier to watch carefully, that Philoctetes may not surprise us here. For of all the Greeks Ulysses is he whom it would most gratify his revenge to see at Lemnos.

NEOP-

NEOPTOLEMUS *makes a sign to the soldier, who ascends an eminence.*

Thou may'st rest satisfied, he will observe whatever passes; and now tell me thy secret freely.

SCENE the SECOND.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS.

ULYSSES.

Oh son of Achilles, be attentive to the interest of all Greece, which is confided to thy care. That which is expected of thee depends more upon thy prudence than thy valour. If I then speak to thee in unusual language, and if I should surprise thee, yet do not deny the Greeks the assistance they require of thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Go on.

ULYSSES.

Philoctetes must be deceived: yet, if he should ask thee who thou art, thou need'st not disguise the truth. Tell him plainly, that thou art the son of Achilles. But thou must pretend, that, actuated by a just resentment, thou hast left the army, to return into thy own country; that thou hast broke off all commerce with those ungrateful princes, who, after they had by the most humble intreaties prevailed upon thee to go with them to Troy, persuaded that the fate of that city depended wholly upon thee, they had the cruelty to refuse thee the arms of Achilles, which thou didst demand, and which were thy right, and had presented them to Ulysses*. Here thou art to load me with the most bitter invectives: do not be apprehensive of offending me. By sparing me, thou wilt betray the common cause of Greece. For remember Neoptolemus, that if we do not wrest the arrows of Hercules from Philoctetes, what will be the consequence. Troy will escape thee, and her destiny will be no longer in thy hands. But why, thou may'st ask, cannot I speak to Philoctetes, and how does it happen that thou may'st do it without danger? Thou, prince,

* This fact is true. In an assembly of the Greeks, Ulysses and Ajax disputed for the arms of Achilles, which were adjudged to Ulysses. But Neoptolemus laid no claim to them, and was not offended that they were given to Ulysses.

camest a voluntary warrior to the siege of Troy. The oath by which we are bound, and which has kept us united for so many years, did not associate thee in our first attempt upon that city. But Philoctetes knows my engagements, and the interest which attaches me to this war; should he who is possessed of those arrows on which our fate depends, should he know that I am in Lemnos, I am lost, and thou wilt perish with me. Be persuaded then that it is by stratagem alone thou can'st make thyself master of these fatal arms. I know a heart like thine scorns all deceit, but success will be the fruits of this. Let us dare to commit a small but necessary crime. We shall have time enough to shew ourselves virtuous. Be guided by my counsels for a moment; and henceforwards, I will imitate thy virtue.

N O E P T O L E M U S.

With horror I hear thy counsels: and how are they to be practised? No, prince, I know myself unfit for artifice. This talent was never possessed either by Achilles or by me. By force I may prevail over Philoctetes, but not by fraud. Alas! how can this miserable prince, alone, enfeebled by his pains, resist us? It was my glory to be appointed by the Greeks the companion of Ulysses in this enterprize; but I blush at the name of traitor. In one word, I should prefer a disappointment, which left me still my honour, to a victory which must load me with infamy.

U L Y S S E S.

Too generous prince, I cannot but applaud these noble sentiments. When young, I preferred, like thee, valour to policy; long experience has opened my eyes. Believe me, Neoptolemus, it is the tongue, and not the arm, that governs all with mortals.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But this which thou requirest of me, is it not, after all, an odious falsehood?

U L Y S S E S.

It is an innocent artifice only, to bring Philoctetes into our measures.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

An artifice, say'st thou! Why not attempt to win him by persuasion?

U L Y S S E S.

Neither persuasion nor force will prevail with him.

N E O P-

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is he invincible then?

ULYSSES.

He is. Judge of it by those inevitable and mortal arrows he possesses.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Then certainly it is not safe to accost him.

ULYSSES.

Not without observing those measures I proposed to thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But is not falsehood criminal?

ULYSSES.

Not when it is necessary.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How is it possible for a man of candour and honesty to mention a falsehood without blushing?

ULYSSES.

Blushing! must a false shame ballance our real interest?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What interest have I in bringing back Philoctetes to Troy?

ULYSSES.

Troy cannot fall but by his arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it not to fall by me then, as thou vainly flattered'st me?

ULYSSES.

These arrows without thee will be useless, and thou can'st do nothing without them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I find I must yield to thy reasons, and force these arrows from him.

ULYSSES.

A double laurel will be the reward.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What laurel? Make glory sure, and I yield.

ULYSSES.

PHILOCTETES:

ULYSSES.

The crown of valour and of prudence will be thine.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *sighing*.

Well, I obey. Oh! virtue cease thy reproaches.

ULYSSES.

Can'st thou answer for thine own heart; are my counsels fixed there?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My word is past. It is sufficient.

ULYSSES.

Thou art then to wait for him here. I will retire, for fear we should be surpris'd, and take with me this spy, whom I will send back to thee, to put an end to thy conversation, and press thy departure. When he appears again he will be disguised, that he may not be known by Philoctetes. Mark well the feigned intelligence he will bring thee, and take thy measures as thou shalt judge most proper. I am going to our vessel, and trust all to thy wisdom. [*As he goes out.*] Oh, Mercury, and thou divine Minerva, whose aid was ever present to me, favour my enterprize this day.

SCENE the THIRD.

CHORUS, NEOPTOLEMUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I. Strangers as we are in this isle, we know not, oh prince, what is required of us. Must we speak, or be silent? In what manner are we to behave towards a prince, rendered distrustful by misfortune. The art of governing men is superior to every other art; and it is from kings, to whom the Gods have confided their sovereign power, that we expect those supreme commands by which we regulate our duty. It is for thee to speak, obedience is our part.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If you have any curiosity to view the retreat of Philoctetes, near the extremity of the shore, you may go and examine it without danger; but as soon as you perceive this formidable warrior, return instantly I command you.

CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

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CHORUS.

Our foresight has already prevented thy desires, prince *. We <sup>ANTISTRO-
PHE I.</sup> will read our duty in thine eyes. Condescend only to point out his dwelling to us. It is necessary we should know where it is, that it may not escape our view. Is it a cave? An asylum such as the wild beasts make choice of? What path leads to it?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Behold that cave, which is open at each end, and that bed of stone; there is his habitation.

CHORUS.

Whither is the unfortunate hero gone?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He has taken that path, at a little distance from his grotto, in search of food to support a languishing life. He hunts with his bow. For such, it is said, is his manner of living: nor has he yet been able to find out any remedy for the disease that consumes him.

CHORUS.

The frightful solitude he lives in wakes all my pity for him. ^{STROPHES II.} Alas! the pleasures of society, the soothing of sympathizing friendship, are unknown to him. Miserable and abandoned, he is the victim of a dire disease, and deprived of all the necessities of life. How has he been able to support such complicated distress! Oh, mortals! how greatly are you to be pitied when the happy medium that separates riches from poverty is not your lot!

Philoctetes is noble, as the noblest among the Greeks. Yet, <sup>ANTISTRO-
PHE II.</sup> oppressed with poverty and pain, by both equally tormented, he has no other society than the birds and savage beasts, and the echo; who repeats his cries and groans.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It is not surprising that his pain should be excessive, for doubtless it was the Gods who struck him in the isle of Chryse; and if he was likewise abandoned by the Greeks, the same Gods not only permitted but designed it should be so, since they were not will-

* By this speech of the Chorus we may discover that they intend to join with Ulysses and Neoptolemus in deceiving Philoctetes; therefore we shall not be surprised to find them throughout the whole piece, following the impressions given them by Neoptolemus, and seconding him.

ing

ing he should use those fatal arrows against Troy, till the time was come when the destiny of Ilion was to be fulfilled.

C H O R U S.

Hark, prince.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What is it?

C H O R U S.

I think I hear plaintive cries.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

From which side do they seem to come?

C H O R U S, *pointing to the place.*

The groans which strike our ears seem to be those of a man who drags himself along with pain. 'Tis Philoctetes without doubt. His complaints may be heard even here. Be prepared, prince. He approaches, he is come ----- Instead of the pipe's cheerful sound, which from afar declares the arrival of the shepherds, his piercing groans and cries are heard. Ah! certainly he has hurt himself by traversing some rugged road. The sight of a vessel so near this desert shore has induced him to go and implore assistance.



A C T the S E C O N D.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

P H I L O C T E T E S, N E O P T O L E M U S, the C H O R U S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O H, strangers, who are ye? What disaster has brought ye to this uninhabited island? What is your country? Of what nation are ye? I know that Grecian habit, that habit which is still so dear to me. Oh! why do you delay to let me hear your voice? I long to find upon your lips a language which I had ceased to speak. Be not less terrified at the sight of an inhabitant of this wild solitude, than moved with compassion for a wretch who has no resource, and sees himself abandoned by Gods and men. If you come as friends, speak, and give me that satisfaction at least which

which no man can with justice refuse another: answer me and hear me in my turn.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Learn first what thou so ardently desirest to know. We are Greeks.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh! words delightful to my ear, after so many years of solitude and silence! Oh, my son! what chance, what destiny, what tempest, or rather what propitious wind, has brought thee hither to end my woes? Suffer me not to be ignorant of an adventure so fortunate for me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I was born in the island of Scyros*; and thither I am returning: I am Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Now thou knowest all.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh! son of a father whom I so greatly loved, citizen of a country whose remembrance is still so dear to me, thou darling of the aged Lycomedes; what vessels hast thou brought hither? From whence comest thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

From the siege of Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

The siege of Troy! Thou wert not in our first expedition.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wert thou then?

PHILOCTETES.

Ah, my son! I perceive thou knowest not who it is thou art speaking to.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How should I know a warrior whom I never saw before.

PHILOCTETES.

How! are my misfortunes unknown to thee? Has not my name even reached thine ears?

* An island of the Ægean sea, under the dominion of Achilles.

I am ignorant of all.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! surely I am peculiarly unfortunate, and hated by the Gods, since no report of my distresses has reached my family, nor even Greece, while my barbarous persecutors laugh in secret at my woes, and my disease increases daily, and acquires new strength to overwhelm me. Know then, my son, I am that companion of Hercules, of whom perhaps thou hast heard, the possessor of his arrows, the son of Pæan, in a word, I am Philoctetes. It is I whom the Atridæ and the king of Ithaca left in this solitary place, without succour, without resource; me whom they beheld languishing under a horrid disease, and wounded by the poisonous sting of a serpent; me whom they deserted here at Lemnos, when we were driven upon this coast by stress of weather, in our return from Chryse. Fatigued with a tedious voyage, I fell asleep in this cavern near the shore. The barbarous wretches took advantage of that fatal moment to sail without me. Some small remains of compassion, as for the most miserable of men, forced them to leave me a little provision, and some linen rags, with which I used to bind my wound. Oh, may they suffer a like fate! They departed, I awoke soon after, awoke to grief, astonishment, tears, and despair! What imprecations did I not utter when I saw my ships ploughing the waves without me! when I found myself alone in this desert, no stranger to assist or comfort me! Alas! I cast my melancholly looks on every side, and found nothing but what they had left with me, poverty, and an inexhaustible source of groans. Yet day followed day, time rolled on, and in this grotto, which served me for a dwelling, reduced to the necessity of subsisting by my own industry, this bow furnished me with food. With my arrows I pierced the timorous birds that flew about my rock: and when I had killed any, I used to crawl painfully along the ground to take up my prey. In the same manner was I forced to fetch water for my use: but the most painful of my labours was cutting wood, as well for dressing my food as to serve me for fuel during the rigour of the winter. I drew from two flints that fire which preserved my languishing life; for it is to this element * that I owe all, except health, which I shall never recover. Such has

* He alludes here to Vulcan, the God of fire and of Lemnos.

been my melancholly life in this horrid island: in which there is neither port nor commerce, nor houses to receive strangers, nor any inducement for ships to put in here. One can hope for no society by but tempests: and if they have sent me some wretches, as during my long residence here this could not fail of sometimes happening, those who were forced to land in this wretched place were satisfied with lamenting my distress, and in compassion left me some food and cloathing. This was all I could obtain from their barren pity; for although I earnestly implored them to carry me to my own country, I found none who were willing to be troubled with me. They left me to die by a slow torture, for ten long years a victim to hunger, while I fed the devouring wound that consumed me. Such was the miserable condition to which the cruelty of Ulysses and the Atridæ reduced me. May the Gods reward them for it!

CHORUS.

We, like those strangers whom chance conducted to this island, compassionate thy woes, unhappy prince. This is all we can do.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But I have proved the truth of what thou say'st. In me thou seest a witness of the injustice of Ulysses and the Atridæ.

PHILOCTETES.

Hast thou then been injured by them? And hast thou, like me, a right to hate them?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Soon may this arm evince my hatred, and satiate my just revenge! * Mycene and Sparta shall feel that my country has her heroes.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, noble sentiments! But say, what affront hast thou received from them, that has excited such deep resentment?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou shalt know, my dear Philoctetes. But where shall I find language strong enough to express the shocking injury I have received from them? When death had deprived me of Achilles ----

* He means Agamemnon and Menelaus: the former was king of Mycene, and the latter of Sparta.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Hold, Neoptolemus. What! is Achilles dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is, prince: but he fell not by a mortal hand. Apollo pierced him with his arrows.

PHILOCTETES.

His death was worthy such a hero. Oh! Neoptolemus, suffer me to interrupt thy story for a few moments, that I may give some tears to the memory of my loved friend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou hast too many miseries of thy own to deplore, to take any share in those of thy friends.

PHILOCTETES.

Since thou wilt have it so, I will delay paying him the tribute of my tears, till thou hast finished thy recital. Go on, and satisfy my curiosity.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

After the death of Achilles, Ulysses and Phœnix equipped a vessel, and came as deputies from the Greeks, to assure me, that now my father was dead, it was the destiny of Troy to fall only by my hands. They found no difficulty in persuading me to embark immediately with them. Grief for the fate of Achilles, the desire of seeing the sad remains of a father, whom while he lived I was not so happy to behold ----- shall I confess all to you, the pleasing illusion with which they flattered me, that the taking of Pergamus was reserved for me, all concurred to hasten my departure. When I arrived in the port of * Sigeum, the whole army gathered round me. They lavished on me the most soothing praises. Every one swore, that he beheld Achilles again. But, alas! Achilles was no more. Fired with these praises, scarce had I shed some tears upon the tomb of my father when I flew to the Atridæ, from whom, I thought, I had a right to expect every thing, and demanded of them my father's armour. Their answer was alike cruel and unjust. "Take whatever else belonged to thy father," said they: "but his armour is in the possession of another. It was bestowed upon Ulysses." Tears of grief and indignation filled

* Port of Troy.

my eyes, my anger at length rose to fury. "Unjust Greeks," said I to them, "how have you dared without my knowledge to dispose of this armour which belonged to me?" Ulysses was present. "Young man," said he, "thou hast no right to this armour, it is mine by the unanimous suffrages of the Greeks. "With that I was rewarded." This answer aggravated my rage, and in the transport with which I was agitated I poured forth a thousand menaces against him, and all the imprecations my fury suggested, unless he restored my armour. My words piqued him, no doubt, yet he discovered no emotion. "Thou hast not," said he, "borne thy part in the dangers of this long siege. Thou hast not merited such armour, and thou already talkest too haughtily. "Thou shalt never carry this prize to Scyros." Pierced to the soul by so cruel an affront, and robbed thus by the wickedest of all men, I left the army, to return to Scyros, less incensed against Ulysses than the Atridæ. For it is the example of the chiefs that makes inferiors base. And now, Philoctetes, I have told thee all. May all who are enemies to Ulysses and the Atridæ be as dear to the Gods as they are to me.

CHORUS.

Oh, earth! who in thy bosom containest the wealthy Pactolus, STROPHE. mother of Jupiter, thou by whom the fiercest lions are tamed, source of all blessings, thou Goddess, thou knowest how many vows I addressed to thee, when the Atridæ thus cruelly injured the son of Achilles, to honour the son of * Laertes with the noblest prize in the world.

PHILOCTETES.

Strangers, this resentment which has procured me the blessing of seeing you in this savage isle, is but too just. Like you I am convinced that the injury you complain of ought only to be charged to the Atridæ and Ulysses. I have long known Laertes' son. Falshood dwells on his lips; his hands are practised in iniquity: nothing either good or just can be suggested by a heart like his. I am not surprised therefore at all I have heard from you. But how did Ajax brook this injustice?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Had Ajax been alive, they would not have dared to commit it.

* Ulysses.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Oh heaven! Ajax then is dead, and yet Diomedes lives! and this base branch of Syfiphus *, this Ulysses, purchased while yet unborn by his father, he still enjoys the light!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Both live, and flourish in the army.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And where is Nestor, my old friend, that sage who knows so well how to confound the artifices of such base men, and who was the soul of all the Grecian councils?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Nestor is alive, but unhappy. He has lost his son Antilochus.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Alas! what dost thou tell me? Death then has spared not one of those who best deserved to live. What shall we think of heaven! The virtuous fall, and vile Ulysses lives!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

† Antilochus was brave: but life is not always the reward of valour.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Where was Patroclus then, the beloved friend of thy father?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

In the tomb. War, cruel and undiscerning war, has mowed down the good, and only spared the wicked.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Alas! I find it is too true. But since we are speaking of the wicked only, say what is become of him ---- of him who possessed a wit so dangerous, a tongue so false and wicked -----

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Thou meanest Ulysses.

* The enemies of Ulysses used to say, that his father Laertes purchased at a high price his marriage with Anticlea, who was already with child of him.

† The sense of this answer is equivocal.

I have made it relate to Antilochus. If it was of Ulysses Neoptolemus was speaking, the sense would be, *He combats by stratagem; but he is often deceived.*

PHILOCTETES.

No: Therfites. It is him I mean, that noisy babler.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I never yet have seen him: but it is said that he is still alive.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well. Thus ought it to be; the refuse of the army lives: I thank the Gods for it. They seem to take pleasure in closing the gates of death against fraud and injustice, and open them only for the good and virtuous. Thus the Gods act, and yet we praise them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

As for me, oh! Philoctetes, far from Ilion and the Atridæ, far from an army which I hate, where evil prevails over good, where probity and virtue are oppressed by lawless power, I go to live contented in the rude isle of Scyros. Adieu: may the Gods heal thy wound. I shall now return to my ship, and with the first favourable breeze launch from this shore.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my son, so soon then wilt thou leave me!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It is time to depart. I may lose a favourable opportunity by being at this distance from my vessel.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, my son! I conjure thee by the manes of thy father, by thy mother, by all that is dearest to thee in the world, leave me not to those miseries which thy own eyes have been witnesses of. I know I shall be burdensome to thee; but it would be dishonourable to forsake me, desolate as I am: and thou art not capable of committing ought that is base. None but great souls know how much glory there is in being good. And will it not be glorious for thee to have preserved a miserable wretch, and to have restored him to his country? Throw me into the prow, the stern, the sink itself, or wherever I may be least troublesome to thee. Grant me this favour. I implore it in the name of that Deity, the protector of suppliants. Oh! suffer thyself to be moved by my prayers. Notwithstanding the torture of my wound, I will throw myself at thy feet to obtain this request. Leave me not in a desert, where there

is no human footstep. Take me into thy own country, or into * Eubia, from whence I may easily transport myself to mount Oeta, and the pleasant banks of the river Sperchius. Restore me to my father. I desired him to send me a ship. Alas! he is dead perhaps, or those who promised to tell him my destiny have not done it; and, eager to return to their own country, have forgot me. Oh, my son! from thee I hope for succour. Remember the instability of all human things. He who is happy should be fearful of abusing that favour he holds from the Gods, and should endeavour to become worthy of it, by relieving the miserable.

C H O R U S.

Comply with the request of Philoctetus, prince. His miseries must surely have excited thy pity. Oh! may the Gods relieve him. Were it only through hatred of the Atridæ, I would assist him. And by this act thou wilt at once have the satisfaction of making him happy, of punishing the treacherous Greeks, and of turning aside the wrath of those Gods who are the revengers of slighted innocence.

N E O P T O L E M U S, *to the Chorus.*

Friends, your request is generous. But will you not repent this generosity when his disease becomes offensive to you?

C H O R U S.

No, prince: I will never incur the reproaches of having meanly repented of what humanity prompted me to do.

N E O P T O L E M U S, *to the Chorus.*

I should be ashamed to appear less generous than you are. I consent then to receive him into my ship: let us depart immediately. It shall not be my fault if all his wishes are not satisfied. And now may the Gods grant us a happy arrival at the desired port †.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Oh, blessed day! Oh, noble Neoptolemus! Youth worthy of thy father's glory! And you, ye dear companions of this voyage, what thanks do I not owe you for such a benefit? Permit me to

* Eubea, a great island in the Ægean sea, now called *Negropent*. Oeta, a mountain in Thessaly, called *Bunina*. It extends as far as Thermopyle.

† He means Troy, and Philoctetes understands by it his own country.

bid this dismal mansion adieu. Enter with me, and see how I have lived, and what I have endured. None but myself could have endured so much. But necessity taught me patience and resignation: from her men learn to extract good from wretchedness itself.

CHORUS.

Stop a moment, Neoptolemus. Here is one of our companions coming towards us: he has a stranger with him. Let us enquire what brings them hither.

SCENE the SECOND.

To them two Greeks. One disguised like a merchant.*

The disguised SPY.

Son of Achilles, I desired this man, whom with two of his companions thou left'st to guard thy ship, to bring me instantly to thee, in whatever part of this island thou wert. I am come from the camp before Troy, and was returning in a small vessel to Pepareth†. Happening by chance to come on shore here, I was informed that thou had'st also landed on this island. I thought it my duty therefore, before I reembarked, to disclose a secret of importance to thee, in which thou art greatly concerned. Know, prince, the Greeks have formed a design against thee; but why do I say a design? It is more, since it will be executed immediately.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou shalt find I will not be ungrateful for this service. Say then what have they resolved on?

SPY.

Thou art pursued by Phoenix‡ and the son of Theseus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

With what intent? Is it to appease my just resentment that they come, or to force me back to Troy?

SPY.

I know not.

* This is the same spy who in the first act appeared only as a mute person, and whom Ulysses had sent to Neoptolemus, disguised like a merchant.

† A little island in the Ægean sea, opposite to mount Athos.

‡ Phoenix was governor to Neoptolemus. He had educated Achilles also.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Have the Atridæ persuaded Phœnix to pursue me?

S P Y.

That he pursues thee is certain, and e'er long he will appear.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

How happened it that Ulysses did not undertake this commission? Was it fear that with-held him?

S P Y.

Diomede and he were sent on some other expedition at the time I left the camp*.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

On some other expedition? Whither?

S P Y.

To----- [*In a low voice.*] Who is this man, prince, whom I see with thee?

N E O P T O L E M U S, *half whispering.*

Thou seest Philoctetes.

S P Y to N E O P T O L E M U S.

Enough. Fly, prince, fly this shore.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

What says he, Neoptolemus, what means this mysterious discourse, these suspicious whispers?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I do not understand him: but I will oblige him to explain himself.

S P Y.

I hope thou wilt not require me to betray the army, and the secrets of the Atridæ. I owe every thing to them, and they have a claim to all the gratitude one in my humble station can shew.

* There is great art in this conversation between Neoptolemus and the Greek soldier. Ulysses had desired the young prince to accommodate his answers to the feigned intelligence brought him by the Spy whom he was to send to him. Neoptolemus ob-

serves his instructions, and, pretending that he was greatly interested in what the fictitious merchant had told him, artfully turns the discourse upon Ulysses, to lead him to confess that Ulysses was sent in search of Philoctetes.

N E O P-

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

I hate the Atridæ. Philoctetes is their enemy, and therefore, my dearest friend, speak freely, and conceal nothing from me.

S P Y.

Consider, prince -----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have already considered --- Answer to what I demanded of thee.

S P Y.

If thou should'st force this secret from me, thine wilt be the guilt of breach of trust.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I take that guilt upon myself. Now speak.

S P Y.

Well, since it must be so, know then that Ulysses and Diomedes have bound themselves by an oath to bring Philoctetes either willingly or by force back to the siege. For this purpose they have left the camp. Ulysses publicly boasted, that he was sure of succeeding, and even appeared more sanguine and more determined than Diomedes.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Tis strange that the Greeks should, after ten years neglect of an unhappy warrior, whom they abandoned, begin to think of him now. Whence proceeds this sudden change? Have the just Gods touched them with remorse at last?

S P Y.

Hear the whole scheme; some circumstance of which thou can'st not I think be ignorant of. In Troy there was a celebrated prophet, called Helenus, a son of Priam. This prince was by the crafty Ulysses surpris'd one night, and brought prisoner to the camp. Helenus, among many other Oracles, declared to the Greeks, that they would never be able to subvert Troy till they had prevail'd upon Philoctetes to quit his island and return to the siege. Ulysses carefully treasured up these words: he quickly took his resolution, and swore he would bring Philoctetes back. "I hope," added he, "to effect this by persuasion; but, if that fails, I will have recourse to violence. My head, oh Greeks! shall answer the success of this design." Now you have heard

all. Fly then, fly both: lose not a moment; take all your companions with you instantly*.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

How! has the perfidious wretch sworn to bring me back to the camp! He may as well flatter himself, that, like his father Syfiphus, he can force a shade to visit the day again.

S P Y.

You have heard all I know. Suffer me now to return to my ship. May the Gods shower upon you all real blessings. Adieu.
[Exit.]

S C E N E the T H I R D.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, the CHORUS.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Oh Gods, what arrogance! And does Ulysses, does the traitor boast, that by his false, his crafty promises Philoctetes will be won to return with him? No, never, never. I would rather hold commerce with the serpent, whose poisonous sting has wounded me, than mingle in society with Laertes's son. But what will not malice and pride like his attempt! Perhaps he is already in ambush to surprise me. † Let us fly, my dear Neoptolemus, that the sea may be betwixt this traitor and I.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

‡ But the wind is contrary to us.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

It is favourable enough for one who only seeks to avoid a hated foe.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

If the wind be against us, neither is it fair for Ulysses.

* These words, partly true and partly false, are dictated by Ulysses to the Spy, to hasten the departure of Philoctetes. Ulysses is the soul of the whole intrigue. He acts without appearing. This artful design against Philoctetes was laid in the first scene.

† It was this eagerness to avoid him that Ulysses foresaw, when he formed the stratagem to be carried on by the pretended merchant.

‡ Neoptolemus enters perfectly well into this scheme, as he promised he would. He makes slight objections to Philoctetes, only to have them refused, and deceives him the more securely as he appears to have not the least knowledge of this pretended merchant.

PHILOCTETES.

All winds are alike to pirates and robbers.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well, since thou insistest upon it, we will go immediately. Bring from thy grotto whatever thou shalt judge necessary to take with thee.

PHILOCTETES.

My dear friend, very few things are needful for me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou may'st be supplied with all thou hast occasion for when we are on board.

PHILOCTETES.

Permit me to take some plants with me, the leaves of which soften the pain of my wound.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Certainly. Hast thou any thing else to carry?

PHILOCTETES, *going towards his cave.*

This bow and these arrows are all my riches. I guard the precious treasure with the utmost care. If any thing happens to me more than usual, see that I am not deprived of it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

These celebrated arms are thine then?

PHILOCTETES.

They are the arms I always use.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it lawful for me to view them nearer, to touch them with my hands, and with awful reverence to kiss this sacred monument of Alcides?

PHILOCTETES.

Do with them what thou pleasest. This bow and all that I possess dispose of freely.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have ventured to give my wishes utterance: but if they appear presumptuous tell me so plainly. I would not profane these arms, consecrated by Hercules.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

My son, this modest diffidence, this pious awe, have charmed me. I can deny thee nothing. It is thou who this day restorest me to the light, to my country, to my aged father, to my friends, and to myself. It is thou who deliverest me from the persecutions of my enemies. Come then, handle these sacred arms, and boast of being the only Greek who has deserved to touch them. This present was the reward of my services; and the favour I now grant thee is in recompence for the benefit thou hast bestowed upon me. We ought to do good to those from whom we receive it: gratitude is the most inestimable of all treasures.

NOEPTOLEMUS.

Enter thy grotto.

PHILOCTETES.

Enter it with me. My pain is so violent that I have need of thy assistance.

SCENE the FOURTH.

CHORUS *only*.

STROPHE I.

Ixion, surpris'd by Jupiter in his impious attempt upon the first and greatest of the Goddesses, is chained to a wheel, and whirled incessantly around it. Except this daring criminal, what mortal ever suffered a destiny so cruel as that of the innocent Philoctetes? For, alas! what crime hath he committed? He who is the friend of virtue, and of virtuous men. How, torn by so many storms, how has he been able to support his miseries?

ANTISTROPHE I.

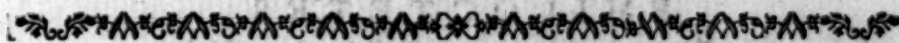
Exposed to the inclement air, languishing under an incurable disease, no friend to sooth his grief and listen to his complaints, without society, without relief, his burning sighs breathed to the senseless rocks, his bitter groans by the resounding echoes doubled; and, in the few short intervals of his pain, forced to drag his wretched weight upon the ground in search of food; like an helpless infant without the mother's supporting arm.

STROPHE II.

To him the earth grants none of those blessings with which she rewards the toils of other mortals. Long, long has he been a stranger to their food, unless his arrows pierce by chance some bird that flies too near his grot. Unhappy Philoctetes! for ten years thou hast not known the taste of that delicious juice which

Bacchus gives so freely; reduced to bless thy fortune, when in the hollow of a broken rock thou seest a little water fallen from heaven and treasured there, and that to quench thy thirst a painful journey is necessary.

* Soon will his miseries be ended. In the son of Achilles the ANTISTRO-
Gods have sent him a generous friend. Philoctetes after this long, PHR II.
this melancholly absence, shall see again his native country: again he shall behold the nymphs of Melis lead up the sprightly dance: the plains, watered by the river Sperchius, again shall meet his ravished eyes, and mount Oeta, from whence Alcides rose from surrounding flames to bright Olympus.



A C T the T H I R D †.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, the CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *coming out of the cave.*

Follow me, Philoctetes ----- But why this melancholly silence, this sudden amazement, in which thy senses all seem buried?

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What ails thee, Philoctetes?

* The Greeks, who compose the Chorus, were under the direction of Neoptolemus. They take all their measure from him, and confirm whatever he says. It is not at all probable, that they believed their leader spoke sincerely when he promised Philoctetes to convey him to his own country. They here pretend to believe him, lest, if they delivered their own sentiments, they might be overheard by Philoctetes, whose grotto was but a little distance from them.

† This act is very short. But the ancients were not at much pains to make their acts equal in length. The two scenes which compose it have more action than words.

The Greeks were particularly fond of shew and representation. The unforeseen agony with which Philoctetes is seized, is an obstacle which retards the conclusion: besides, the scene is terminated by an interlude sung by the Chorus while Philoctetes is asleep: which is sufficient for us to conclude, that this is a complete act, according to the method of the Greeks. As for the rest, nothing was ever more happily imagined than this obstacle, by which the stratagem of Ulysses, (hitherto so successfully carried on, that the whole piece seemed near a conclusion,) is intirely destroyed.

PHILOC-

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

This is nothing, my son. Let us go on to the sea-side.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Art thou seized with new pains? Do not thyself this violence to conceal them from me.

PHILOCTETES.

My wound was never easier than it is now. Oh heaven! [*Afide.*]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ah, Philoctetes, thou groanest! Thou invokest the Gods!

PHILOCTETES.

I do; that they may favour our flight ----- Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In vain would'st thou conceal thy torture. Thy groans betray thee. Say, art thou not in pain?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my son, I am lost. Spite of myself I must confess, that I am no longer able to support this horrid torture. The venom of the serpent glides through my veins; a hidden fire consumes me. Oh heaven! what misery, what excess of anguish! My son, I conjure thee in the name of the Gods, if thou hast a sword, cut off my foot. Oh, haste! fear not to kill me: strike, strike, Neoptolemus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What new pain is this which forces such dreadful cries from thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Dost thou not know then? Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Say, whence this increase of pain?

PHILOCTETES.

Thou knowest too well, I tell thee. Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What.

PHILOCTETES.

I know not.

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou knowest not!

PHILOCTETES, *redoubling his cries.*

Oh! oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How dreadful is this fit!

PHILOCTETES.

No words can describe my anguish: be not thou deaf to compassion.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What shall I do? Speak, command me.

PHILOCTETES.

Let not thy horror at such a torturing disease force thee to abandon me: for I will own to thee, it returns in regular fits, as a traveller, when he is weary of his journey, seeks his home. Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

So far am I from entertaining a thought of leaving thee, that my compassion increases in proportion to thy sufferings. Let this arm raise thee, and support thy trembling body.

PHILOCTETES.

No, no. But take this bow, which thou didst so ardently wish to behold. Keep it till my torments are abated. These symptoms are always followed by sleep, which is the only remedy. Leave me to indulge it; and, if my enemies arrive, I conjure thee in the name of the Gods, suffer not this precious pledge to be taken from thee. Thou seest that I confide it to thee. Guard against fraud and violence, and, oh! betray me not.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be satisfied. None but thy hands and mine shall ever touch it. Give it me without fear*.

PHILOCTETES.

Receive then these sacred arms, and I beseech the Gods that

* The character of Neoptolemus is here strongly marked. He has deceived Philoctetes, contrary to his inclination: and, moved by the confidence this unhappy hero

has placed in him, he shews, that he is resolved to carry this artifice no farther; and the event confirms it.

they may be less fatal to thee than they have been to Hercules and to me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

May the Gods hear our prayers, and conduct us to the destined port.

PHILOCTETES.

I am afraid thy prayers will not be granted. My black, thick blood begins again to boil within my veins. ----- Ah! what new symptom's this! ----- What do I not suffer from this cruel wound! Ah! ----- my disease gathers new strength. It devours its prey ----- Alas! my friends, leave me not I conjure you ----- Oh! Ulysses, why does not this poison tear thy bowels? To you, ye sons of Atreus, to you I owe these long, these horrible tortures ----- Oh! much desired death, why comest thou not? ----- So often called, why dost thou not relieve me? ----- Oh! haste, my son, and with the fire of Lemnos* burn me this instant, as I burnt the son of Jupiter ----- Those arms which now thou bearest were my reward ----- They shall be thine ----- What say'st thou? Why dost thou not answer me? Thy mind seems discomposed. What means this alteration†?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! I am afflicted to see thee in this condition. Compassion is all I have to give.

PHILOCTETES.

Take courage, my son. These fits are dreadful: but they last not long. The only favour I implore is, that thou wilt not embark without me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be comforted. I will not leave thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Dost thou promise me this?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I give thee my word upon it.

* He mentions this fire as being the most violent, and in allusion to the fable, which places the forges of Vulcan and the seat of fire in Lemnos.

† Neoptolemus appears to be in great

confusion: the emotions of his mind appear in his countenance, and he is unable to conceal his remorse for having consented to betray Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES.

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PHILOCTETES.

It would be shameful to require an oath of thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I should be the basest of men, were I capable of betraying thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Give me thy hand, as a pledge of thy fidelity.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Here it is.

PHILOCTETES, *his senses disordered.*

This is it. Yes, here it is -----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What say'st thou, Philoctetes?

PHILOCTETES.

No, 'tis here -----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! why wanders thus thy mind? Why are thine eyes thus wildly fixed upon the heavens?

PHILOCTETES, *falling upon the ground.*

Leave me ---- drag me ----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Whither?

PHILOCTETES.

No, leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I cannot leave thee thus.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, earth! swallow up a dying wretch, who never, never can rise again.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

The wildness of his transports are abated, and a soft slumber will soon possess his senses. He reclines his head. He sleeps. Ah! see, a profuse sweat covers his whole body. His wound is open, and black corrupted blood streams from it. Let us leave him to his repose.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

N E O P T O L E M U S, the C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Oh, sleep! thou gentle tyrant of our senses, in whose soft chains our pains, our griefs, our cares are all forgotten, oh! come, thou salutary medicine, heal the tortures of Philoctetes, and continue that serenity thou hast already diffused over his spirits. And now, prince, what hast thou resolved on? What more is there to be done? Occasion smiles upon us: let that decide. It is of more value than all our consultations.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Philoctetes sleeps. He cannot hear us. Friends, it is not sufficient that we are possessed of his arms. We must carry the hero himself to Troy. Unless this can be effected, all we have hitherto done is useless. The Gods have ordered it, and reserve for him the glory of subjecting Troy. Besides, I have given my word to bring him, and I should be criminal if I failed to perform it.

C H O R U S.

The Gods will then inspire thee, and give success to thy design. But let us have thine orders instantly, and take care he does not surprise us. In his condition a long, sound sleep cannot be expected. If thou art determined to be governed by the advice of a certain chief* (though indeed in delicate conjunctures the wise themselves are doubtful how to act), what thou dost must be done secretly, and with dispatch: but the winds call us. Philoctetes, helpless and plunged in the thick night of sleep, like an inhabitant of the shades, delivers himself up to us an easy prey. Fortune invites us. Let us seize the favourable moment, and bear him off.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Stay, let him not perceive any perplexity in us. He opens his eyes; he raises his head.

* The Chorus mean Ulysses; but do not mention him, for fear that the very sound of his name should wake Philoctetes, and betray the secret.

ACT the FOURTH.

SCENE the FIRST.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, the CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES, *awaking.*

OH, light! which now revisits these sad eyes again, to shew me horrors! Oh, vain, vain hope! how hast thou deceived me ---- Where are ye, strangers ----- [*Perceiving them.*] Pardon these unworthy suspicions, my dear Neoptolemus. For indeed it was scarce possible to conceive that thou would'st carry generosity to such excess as to associate thyself in my miseries, to stay near an expiring wretch, watch and attend me. Not thus are the Atridae use to act; but thou art the son of Achilles, and like his, thy noble heart. My cries have not wearied thee: thou hast not been disgusted with the infection of my wound. And now the violence of my pain is abated, I have an interval of ease. Help me to rise, my son; and as soon as I have recovered a little strength we will embark.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My dear Philoctetes, I am rejoiced to see thee thus unexpectedly delivered from thy torments. Alas! they had scarce left any appearance of life in thee. Come, let us raise thee. These Greeks will, if thou wilt permit them, carry thee to the ship. Their burden will be light. Judge by their tenderness and mine how willingly they will bear it.

PHILOCTETES.

What do I not owe thee? Lend me thine arm; it will be sufficient. * They may leave us. I would not trouble them before the time. I shall do it but too often during the voyage.

[*The Chorus walk before to the sea-side.*]

* These words, of which the sense is not sufficiently plain, have yet given room to believe, that the Chorus go before towards the ship. The following scene is more beautiful, and the return of the Chorus more interesting. Philoctetes, in this scene declares, that he has now only the rocks to

complain to. This seems to suppose the absence of the Chorus. And it is natural to believe, that Ulysses sent the Greeks back again to Neoptolemus, to hasten his departure, and to see if no new obstacle had arisen.

SCENE

SCENE the SECOND.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be it as thou pleasest. But endeavour to recal thy strength, and to support thyself.

PHILOCTETES.

Fear nothing. I am accustomed to these accidents. My strength will return as usual.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *in a low voice as he leads him.*

Wretch that I am, what am I doing*?

PHILOCTETES, *stopping.*

What is the matter, my son? What words are these which have escaped thee?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Cruel uncertainty! what, what shall I resolve on?

PHILOCTETES, *surprised.*

What uncertainty? Alas, my son, do not speak thus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And this, even this afflicts me.

PHILOCTETES.

Does the shocking sight thou hast so lately seen, make thee repent of the promise thou hast given me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Oh! to a heart unused to fraud, how painful is the consciousness of having done an ill action!

PHILOCTETES.

But in preserving a virtuous man, thou hast done nothing to disgrace the manes of thy father.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art virtuous: I shall no longer be thought so. That is my misery.

* Neoptolemus has already made it appear, that he repented of the part he had been prevailed upon to act. Compassion now prevails, and he begins to declare himself.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou hast acted nobly. But what am I to think of this language?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Oh! ye immortal Gods, what shall I do? I shall be doubly criminal by my words and actions.

PHILOCTETES, *aside*.

Ah! I perceive it: he deliberates whether he shall betray me or not. He would depart without me*.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No, I will not abandon thee. But if I take thee with me contrary to thine inclination, what remorse, what anguish will be mine! Now thou knowest the cause of that perplexity thou sawest me in.

PHILOCTETES.

How! what sayest thou, my son? Unfold this riddle.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can no longer conceal from thee the truth. Pity, more powerful than every other consideration, forces me to declare it. ----- I must ----- Oh, Philoctetes! I must carry thee to the Atridae. Thou art going to the army.

PHILOCTETES.

Ah, what hast thou said?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

One moment suspend thy rage, and listen to me.

PHILOCTETES.

What should I listen to now? What dost thou intend to do with me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

To cure thee first, and then with thy assistance to reduce Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Art thou in earnest?

* These suspicions of Philoctetes form tolemus, as he discloses himself, is more a second obstacle to their departure. Neop- unwilling than ever to betray him.

PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

The fates have thus decreed. It must be so. Calm thy resentment then, and follow me.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! I am betrayed. Oh! young stranger, what a snare hast thou laid for me. Restore me, restore me instantly my bow and arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It cannot be done, Philoctetes. The command of the chiefs, the public interest, my own promise, all concur to make it impossible.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh cruelty worthy thy race! Thou base contriver of a most infamous artifice, how hast thou dared to impose upon my credulous heart? Dost thou not blush to raise thine eyes towards me, after having so inhumanly betrayed a miserable suppliant?---- But, oh! whither does my rage transport me? Alas! my son, if thou deprivest me of these arrows, thou deprivest me of life. Restore them, I conjure thee in the name of the Gods; restore them to me. Restore me that life thou hast robbed me of. Alas! wretch that I am; he answers not; he beholds me calmly. Oh, ye shores! ye promontaries of this island, ye savage beasts, ye rugged rocks, my sole companions, to you I utter my complaints: for I have none but you to whom I can complain; to you my wailings are familiar. Must I be betrayed by the son of Achilles? He swore to carry me to my own country, and he forces me to Troy. He violates the sanctity of an oath, to rob me of the sacred bow of Hercules: he would drag me in triumph after his car: he would shew me a miserable spectacle to the Grecian army. He triumphs over Philoctetes as if he had vanquished him in fight; nor perceives, that this triumph is over a corpse, a shadow, a phantom. Oh! had he attacked me in my vigour! and now, even now, in this helpless condition, has he not vanquished me by stratagem only? Alas! I am the victim of an inhuman fraud. What shall I do? Oh! my son, restore my arms: be like thy father, be like thyself. What say'st thou? Nothing! Oh, thou savage rock! to thee, to thee I return. Naked, miserable, abandoned, destitute of food, in this den I shall expire. I have no longer my arrows to kill the wild beasts. They will devour me: I shall be their prey in my turn. And this distress, this anguish, this despair, I suffer from

a youth whose sincerity I relied on. Yet hear me, Neoptolemus, none of those imprecations, the last refuge of despairing wretchedness have yet passed my lips. I curse thee not. Thou may'st change thy mind. But, ah! be careful what resolution thou takest now; and judge by my rage, my fury, what vengeance I am capable of.

SCENE the THIRD.

To them the CHORUS, *who had returned during the latter part of the preceding scene.*

CHORUS.

Resolve, prince, on what is to be done. The winds invite us. He must go, or be contented to stay here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Oh! friends, I own it; I am greatly moved: but it is not from this moment only that I begin to feel remorse.

PHILOCTETES.

Listen, my son; I conjure thee in the name of the Gods, listen to that pity which pleads for me. Load not thyself before these men with the infamy of having deceived a miserable wretch.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *aside.*

What shall I do? Would to the Gods I had never left Scyros!

PHILOCTETES.

Oh! Neoptolemus, thou dost not seem to be a wicked man! Thou hast been prompted to this action by bad advice. Restore me my arms, and be gone.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What shall we do, my friends?

SCENE the FOURTH.

To them ULYSSES.

ULYSSES to NEOPTOLEMUS.

Perfidious! and dost thou ballance then? Give me these arms, and depart.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, Gods! who is this stranger? Do I not see Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

Yes, it is Ulysses whom thou seest.

PHILOCTETES.

I am lost. This treachery was his work.

ULYSSES.

Yes, it was mine. I own it.

PHILOCTETES to NEOPTOLEMUS.

Restore me my arms, my son.

ULYSSES.

He would do well indeed! Thou shalt not have them. Go with us, or I will force thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou! wilt thou force me, traitor?

ULYSSES.

It is resolved on, unless thou wilt go willingly.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, Lemnos! oh, sacred fire of Vulcan, Ulysses threatens to force me from thy isle! Thou seest this horrid outrage, and thou suffereest it!

ULYSSES.

Jupiter, he who is master of the Gods, is master of this isle. I but obey his orders.

PHILOCTETES.

Dar'st thou, thou perjured wretch, dar'st thou charge on the Gods thy fraud?

ULYSSES, *pointing to the sea-side.*

Say rather, I invoke them as witnesses to the truth. Behold the path they have commanded thee to follow. Come with us.

PHILOCTETES.

No, traitor, I will not go with thee.

ULYSSES.

Thou shalt go. The die is cast.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, ye immortal Gods! when, when was Philoctetes a slave,
that he must be treated thus?

ULYSSES.

He his not treated like a slave, but like a hero; like one of the
deliverers of Greece, with whom it is decreed he shall have the
glory of subverting Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Where he shall suffer miseries unnumbered. No, while he has
this cave for an asylum he can fear nothing.

ULYSSES.

What dost thou resolve on?

PHILOCTETES, *endeavouring to throw himself off the rock.*

To die.

ULYSSES, *to the soldiers.*

Seize him. Preserve him from his own wild rage.

PHILOCTETES, *held.*

Oh, arms without defence! oh, hands deprived of weapons!
must thou support these ignominious bands? Oh, thou from whom
ought that's just and good did never yet proceed, what a base arti-
fice hast thou conceived to ruin me, yet durst not shew thyself as
author of it! By this youth thou hast deceived me: himself de-
ceived by thee the first. His noble heart was not framed for such
base purposes: his candor was worthy of my confidence, and me-
rited not to be the victim of thy seductions. He knew not that
he was the minister of thy vile artifice. I perceived it: he felt for
me, and with regret obeyed thee. It was thou whose malignant
wit, the fruitful source of plots and treacheries, that taught him
how to deceive. Thou only could'st have forced him, in spite of
his remorse, to sport with my credulity. Barbarian! thou hast
bound me, and would'st drag me to that shore where I was left
by thee, destitute of friends, of comfort, far from my country,
and crazed from the number of the living. Oh, may the Gods
punish thee! ----- But the Gods hear me not. My imprecations
fall to the ground: on thee they lavish favours, and me they load
with miseries. Go then, let my misfortunes make thee sport;
laugh at my woes with thy beloved Atridæ, whose tool thou art.

Base * and unworthy, was it not with reluctance that thou did'st follow them to the siege? And yet thou art their favourite. I brought seven vessels willingly to their aid, and me they abandoned as the wickedest of men. At least, thou chargest upon them this shocking act; and they, in their turn, cast all the infamy of it upon thee. But say, what is thy design? Why would'st thou force me away? What use shall I be of? I am now nothing: I am already dead. Oh, thou enemy of the Gods and men! why do I not now appear to thee as formerly, a useless, painful burden? Why do not my cries and the stench of my wound disgust thee? Why art thou not afraid that I shall disturb the sacrifices? These were thy pretences for casting me from the army. ----- Inhuman Greeks! Oh! may ye be the victims of my horrid imprecations! If the Gods are just (and sure they are), I shall behold your punishment. Or else ye would not have undertaken this voyage for a miserable wretch. The pangs of remorse have seized you; a stroke from heaven pierces your hearts, and forces you, spite of yourselves, to remember me. But, oh! my native land, and you ye Gods, the witnesses and revengers of my wrongs, punish them at length, punish them all, and I am satisfied. Proportion your vengeance to your compassion for me. Let me see them perish before my eyes, and I shall think myself cured.

C H O R U S to U L Y S S E S.

He is wild with rage; and far from sinking under his miseries, he seems to defy them.

U L Y S S E S.

I have many things to say in answer to him; but he is not in a condition to listen to me. One word shall suffice at present.

Philoctetes, I am all that thou hast described me. Can'st thou imagine, that the interest of virtuous men must not yield to that of the public? No one loves virtue and benevolence more than myself. The art of managing all hearts is mine. Thine only is unmanageable. Well, thou shalt conquer me. I yield to thy desires. [*To the Chorus.*] Give him his liberty, my friends, and leave him here. We do not need his presence, since we have the arms of Hercules in our possession. Teucer knows how to use them; and should he fail us, I flatter myself that I can manage

* Ulysses counterfeited madness, that he might be dispensed with from going to the siege of Troy.

them.

them. Yes, Philoctetes, they shall be as powerful in my hand as thine. The army has no need of thee. Farewel. Remain here in thy island. We will leave thee, and depart. This bow shall give me that glory which was destined for thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Inhuman! to what a helpless state does he reduce me? What! darest thou shew thyself to the army, adorned with the spoils thou hast robbed me of?

ULYSSES.

It is in vain to talk to thee. Farewel.

PHILOCTETES *to* NEOPTOLEMUS.

Generous son of Achilles, thou art silent; and wilt thou leave me also?

ULYSSES *to* NEOPTOLEMUS.

Follow me, Neoptolemus. Look not upon him. Thy mean compassion will destroy thee.

PHILOCTETES, *to the Chorus.*

And will you, my friends, will you abandon me too? Cannot my misery touch your hearts?

CHORUS, *pointing to* NEOPTOLEMUS.

There is our leader. He only can determine us. His will is ours.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *to the Chorus.*

Ulysses will condemn me for this tenderness. It matters not. Do you all stay with Philoctetes, if he desires it; while we prepare for our departure, and perform our devotions to the Gods. Perhaps, during this interval, a happy alteration in his sentiments will render him more pliant to our arguments. Ulysses and I will go to the shore, and as soon as you receive orders attend us there.

SCENE the FIFTH.

PHILOCTETES, the CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES, *at the entrance of his cave.*

Oh, cavern! thou solitary mansion of my woes, never, never STROPHE I. will I forsake thee! Thou hast long been my habitation: thou shalt be now my tomb! Nothing have I now to subsist on! No remains

remains of hope are left me ! Blow me ye whirlwinds through the air ! What have I now to do on earth ?

CHORUS.

STROPHE II. Thou art thyself the author of thy miseries. Thy only enemy is Philoctetes. It is in thy own power to be happy, and thou preferest thy wretchedness to that smiling fortune which courts thee.

PHILOCTETES.

ANTISTROPHE I. Wretch that I am, I have now no resource : I must expire in this cave. Grief and famine will consume me. No more shall my arrow pierce the birds that hover round it. Oh ! thou barbarian, by whose vile artifices I perish, why can I not behold thee involved in miseries as endless as my own ?

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE II. It is not to the artifice of men, but to the supreme will of the Gods, that thou must attribute what, contrary to our inclinations, we have acted against thee ! Cease thy imprecations then, and cease to hate us.

PHILOCTETES.

STROPHE III. Calm on the shore the traitor stands. He mocks at my despair, and with impunity makes trial of my arms. Oh ! thou dear treasure, which he has robbed me of ; were you endued with sentiment, what shame would be yours, to pass from the hands of the companion of Hercules into those of the most wicked of men ! When witnesses of his vile artifice, his infamous original, his barbarous crimes, you will detest like me the author of my miseries.

CHORUS.

STROPHE IV. Prince, a virtuous man will both freely speak and hear the truth. Learn then, that the assembled Greeks have ordered Neoptolemus to act as he has done ; and that it is for the common cause that he has been directed by the counsels of Ulysses.

PHILOCTETES.

ANTISTROPHE III. Ye birds, who were my prey, and you, ye savage tenants of these rocks, no longer fly my cave : those arrows, those inevitable arrows that used to terrify you are no longer in my possession. Fearless approach, tear me, devour me. I shall be soon your prey, or that of famine.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

In the name of the Gods, oh, Philoctetes, if holy hospitality ^{ANTISTRO-}
can move thee, pay us back that tenderness thou didst receive from ^{PHI IV.}
us! Reflect that thy destiny is in thy own hands. What madness,
to make misery, grief, and despair thy choice!

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! you increase my woes. How can you take a cruel pleasure in tormenting me?

CHORUS.

How have we deserved this reproach, prince?

PHILOCTETES.

Do you hope to persuade me to return to the Greeks? the
Greeks, whom I abhor!

CHORUS.

Thou would'st, if thou wert reasonable.

PHILOCTETES.

Leave me, be gone, and leave me ----

CHORUS.

Thou shalt be obeyed. We go ----

PHILOCTETES.

Stay, I conjure you in the name of Jupiter, oh! quit me not.

CHORUS, *pretending to go.*

Learn henceforward to moderate thy fury.

PHILOCTETES, *with loud cries.*

My friends, my dear friends, leave me not I beg you.

CHORUS.

What new misfortune occasions these cries.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh, cruel fate! oh, torture! how shall I henceforward endure
these pains? Alas! my friends, return, return.

CHORUS.

What shall we do? Thou art determined. We can no longer
depend upon thee.

PHILOC-

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Pardon these cries, this rage, in pity to my torments.

CHORUS, *returning.*

Listen to our counsels then, and follow us.

PHILOCTETES, *after a pause.*

No, I will not be prevailed upon. My resolution is taken. No, though Jupiter should strike me with his thunders, I will not yield. May Ilion, may the army perish, may they all perish by whom I have been made a sacrifice! As for you, my friends, I have but one favour to implore of you.

CHORUS.

What is it?

PHILOCTETES.

Give me a sword, a hatchet, any weapon.

CHORUS.

What scheme of murder hast thou formed?

PHILOCTETES.

My own. Grief and pain forces me to it. I will cut off my foot, I will pierce my heart.

CHORUS.

Is this thy design?

PHILOCTETES.

I will seek my father.

CHORUS.

Where?

PHILOCTETES.

In the shades. For, alas! he lives no longer. Oh, my country! why am I not permitted to see thee at least once more, after having left thee to succour the perfidious Greeks! And death, death is my reward. [*He hides himself in his cave.*]

CHORUS to PHILOCTETES.

We should already have returned to our vessel, had we not perceived Ulysses and Neoptolemus coming towards us.

ACT

ACT the FIFTH.

SCENE the FIRST.

ULYSSES *and* NEOPTOLEMUS *at a little distance*
from PHILOCTETES.

ULYSSES *to* NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wilt thou not tell me thy reason for this sudden return?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I am going to expiate the crime I have been guilty of.

ULYSSES.

Certainly this crime is in thy opinion very great. May I not know what it is?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My crime is the having listened to the counsels of Ulysses and the Greeks.

ULYSSES.

Ha! what injustice then hast thou committed?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have betrayed an unhappy man.

ULYSSES, *in great emotion.*

What dost thou mean? Oh, heaven! what new design hast thou formed?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No new design, Ulysses. I am resolved to see Philoctetes again, and -----

ULYSSES.

And what? [*Aside.*] I tremble at his purpose.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have robbed him of his arms. I go to restore them to him.

ULYSSES.

How! to restore them? Oh, Gods! what a fatal resolution hast thou taken!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It is not just that I should keep them.

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II

ULYSSES.

U L Y S S E S.

Neoptolemus, I conjure thee by the Gods, answer me truly:
Dost thou intend to do this?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I am resolved to be just.

U L Y S S E S.

Oh! son of Achilles, what is it thou tellest me?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What I am instantly going to do. Need I repeat it again?

U L Y S S E S.

It was too much to say it once.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Then doubt no more: Thou knowest my resolution.

U L Y S S E S.

There are who will oppose it-----

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Who will be rash enough to oppose it?

U L Y S S E S.

All Greece, and I.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Certainly, I am to seek for the prudent Ulysses in his words.

U L Y S S E S.

But I too plainly see the boiling Neoptolemus in his actions.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I value not the reputation of a politician, provided I can satisfy
what I owe to justice.

U L Y S S E S.

Is it just to restore without my consent a treasure, the possession
of which thou owest to my counsels?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By thy counsels I have been guilty of an action which I am now
ashamed of, and am resolved to repair.

U L Y S S E S.

Dost thou not fear the resentment of the army?

N E O P-

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I fear neither the army nor thee, when justice is in question.

ULYSSES.

It is with Neoptolemus then, no longer with the Trojans that we must fight.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do. I consent to it.

ULYSSES.

This sword shall soon answer thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Mine is ready. I wait but for the Greeks and thee.

ULYSSES.

Act as thou think'st proper towards Philoctetes. I will give the army an account of what thou dost. And know, young man, thy treachery shall not long remain unpunished. [*He retires.*]

NEOPTOLEMUS to ULYSSES, as he leaves him.

Thou wilt do wisely. Act always thus for the future, and avoid my rage. [*Going towards the cave.*] Appear, Philoctetes; come out of thy cavern.

SCENE the SECOND.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, the CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

Who calls me? What business hast thou with me now? Is it in thy power to make me more miserable still? Doubtless thou think'st it is, and therefore thou dost return.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be comforted, and hear what I have to say.

PHILOCTETES.

I have heard too much. Thy arts have ruined me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Believe my repentance at least.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

'Twas thus thou did'st win me to believe thee, when thou did'st rob me of my arms. The blackest artifice lay concealed under that too well feigned sincerity.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Forget it; and tell me plainly: art thou determined to remain in this desert, or wilt thou at length yield to our intreaties, and return with us to Troy?

PHILOCTETES.

No more of this ----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is thy resolution fixed?

PHILOCTETES.

Fixed, absolutely fixed.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I came with an intent to soften thy resentment, and, if possible, to persuade thee to go with us. But, since it offends thee to speak on this subject, I am silent.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well thou art. For, oh! in vain would'st thou endeavour to deceive me by thy idle professions. My wounded heart will never pardon thee for the base artifice thou hast practised on me. Unworthy son of a most generous father, thou robbest me of life, and then thou bringest me counsels! Oh, may you perish all! miserably perish! thou, the Atreidæ, and Ulysses! Such are my parting wishes.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Nothing but hatred still, and imprecations! Behold thy arms restored; receive them from my hand.

PHILOCTETES.

How! what new snare hast thou laid for me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Approach. I swear by the sovereign master of the Gods I will restore thy arms.

PHILOCTETES.

Delightful sound! But may I, may I believe thee? Oh, heaven!

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Believe my actions. Draw near. Fear nothing. Receive thy bow.

SCENE the THIRD.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, the CHORUS.

ULYSSES, *suddenly appearing.*

Hold. I oppose this act, in the name of the Atridæ and the whole army.

PHILOCTETES, *after having received his arms from*
NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do I not hear the voice of Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

Behold him here. Yes, Philoctetes, thou seest him who, in spite of Achilles's son, will force thee to the siege.

PHILOCTETES, *taking aim at him.*

Stay. This arrow shall punish thy insolence.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *stopping him.*

Ah! Philoctetes, what would'st thou do? In the name of heaven do not let fly this arrow.

PHILOCTETES.

Oppose me not, my son: suffer me to pierce the traitor's heart.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I must, I will oppose thee -----

PHILOCTETES.

Why wilt thou hinder me from taking vengeance on my inhuman foe?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

* Vengeance would be shameful to us both.

* Corneille, in his *Polieucte*, has the same thought. Polieucte says to Paulina, on occasion of her lover, who had seen her again,

"Quoi, vous me soupçonnez déjà de
"quelque ombrage!"

And Paulina makes this excellent answer, so applauded by a great prince:

"Je ferois à tous trois un trop sensible
"outrage."

She speaks of her husband, of Severus, and herself. *Polieucte*, Act II. Scene IV.

PHILOCT-

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

What have we to fear from the Greeks? Believe me, son, the leaders in the army have as little bravery in their actions as they have pride and fierceness in their words.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It is true. But, Philoctetes, I have now restored thee thy arms. Dost thou still retain any resentment against me?

PHILOCTETES.

No, my son. Thy noble heart is fully unveiled. Not from a Sisyphus* didst thou receive thy birth, but from an hero, as illustrious among the dead as celebrated while we possess him.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How grateful is it to me to hear the praises of Achilles from the mouth of Philoctetes: praises which reflect honour upon me. But now, prince, hear what I have to request of thee. Those misfortunes which proceed from the Gods are inevitable. They must be suffered patiently. But can we hold him excused, or worthy of compassion, who like thee draws them upon himself? Thy heart is filled with resentment: thou art incapable of listening to advice: when a friend speaks to thee, thou instantly takest fire, and treatest him like a foe. Yet I will speak, and I call Jupiter to witness to the truth of my words: and do thou, Philoctetes, engrave them deeply in thy heart. And, first, learn, prince, that thy wound is a stroke from heaven, for having approached the serpent who was guardian of the riches of the temple which were found at Chrysa. Never must thou hope for ease unless thou goest to Troy. The cure of thy distemper is reserved for the sons of Esculapius, as the taking of Troy is to our common efforts and the arrows of Hercules, which thou possessest. Thou may'st ask by what means these wonders were made known to me? Know then, that the Trojan Helenus, that prophet so celebrated, is prisoner in the camp. It is he who has unfolded this mystery. "If thou bringest back Philoctetes," says he, "the fate of Ilion will be determined before the approaching summer. Take my life, ye Greeks, if the oracles I deliver prove untrue." Thus certain of success, can'st thou doubt whether thou oughtest to yield to our intreaties? How glorious for thee to be of all the Greeks the only

* The grandfather of Ulysses.

one judged worthy to accomplish these great decrees of fate! Be not insensible to the happiness of life and health renewed, and to the glory of subverting Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Hateful to me are these decrees! Why, why do I any longer behold the light which I abhor? Why am I not an inhabitant of the shades? ---- What shall I do? Can I resist an enemy so kind and generous? But can I yield to him? After such meanness, how shall I dare to shew myself? Whom can I look upon without blushing? Ye stars who have been witnesses of the indignities cast on me, how can you behold Philoctetes again associated with the Atridæ, who have ruined me; with Ulysses, who has betrayed me. Ah! no. The injuries I have suffered are slight compared with those which I foresee. A heart to whom nature has taught wickedness hardens itself to new crimes. Neoptolemus, I own to thee, thy conduct to me appears incomprehensible. Far from urging me to go to Troy, I expected thou wouldst have dissuaded me from such baseness. Hast thou not been injured by the Greeks? Have they not deprived thee of the armour and the glory of Achilles; and, by an unjust award, preferred Ajax and Ulysses to thee? And yet thou succourest them, and would'st prevail on me to follow thee! No, my son, thou shalt not act thus unworthy of thyself. Carry me back to my own country, as thou hast sworn to do: remain thyself at Scyros, and leave these ingrates to perish. Secure my happiness and thy own. Thus wilt thou doubly oblige Achilles and Philoctetes; and, by abandoning these perfidious Greeks, thou wilt spare thyself the shame of imitating them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thy resentment is but too just. Let us leave the Greeks and the Atridæ. Yet, Philoctetes, what have I requested of thee, but to obey the Gods, and follow a friend?

PHILOCTETES.

I! what should I do at the siege? What! see the sons of Atreus insolently mock the miseries they have been the cause of?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No: but to meet a cure for these miseries, and not to behold thy enemies again, but thy deliverers.

PHILOCTETES.

Madness is in that thought ----

NEOP-

PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This will be thy glory and mine.

PHILOCTETES.

The Gods, who hear thee, are offended.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I speak their will.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou servest the Atridæ.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It is Philoctetes whom I would serve.

PHILOCTETES.

What! by delivering me up to my enemies?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do not consider them as such, and be less haughty in misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

If I have not mistaken thy intention, thou mean'st to ruin me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou hast mistaken it; I mean to preserve thee.

PHILOCTETES.

The Atridæ have cast me out of the army. This is all I comprehend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Tis true: but they are willing to repair their fault by making thee happy now.

PHILOCTETES.

That cannot be, if I must again see them at Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What would'st thou have me do? Nothing can move thee. I must be silent then, and leave thee to languish in misery.

PHILOCTETES.

Leave me my misery. It is dear to me. Perform thy promise only. Carry me back to my own country. There we shall no longer differ. Let us forget Troy, and the Greeks. They have cost me too many tears.

NEOP-

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Let us depart, since thou wilt have it so.

PHILOCTETES, *following him.*

Oh, welcome sound!

NEOPTOLEMUS, *stopping.*

Make trial of thy strength.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis equal to my resolution.

NEOPTOLEMUS, *returning again.*

But how shall I justify myself to the Greeks?

PHILOCTETES.

By despising them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They will ravage my dominions.

PHILOCTETES.

I will fly to thy assistance.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

With what forces?

PHILOCTETES.

With the arrows of Hercules. These arrows and this arm will be sufficient to defend thee, and make them tremble.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well, let us embark. Take a last farewell of Lemnos.

SCENE the FOURTH.

To them, HERCULES, on a cloud.

HERCULES.

Stay, go not yet--Philoctetes, look up and know Alcides: Thou seest, thou hearest him. For thee I have quitted yon azure vault: I come to declare to thee the orders of Jupiter, and to point thee out another road. Stay then, and hear me. Thou knowest what labours I have undergone, and all that I have suffered, to acquire that immortality I now enjoy. Learn, that the same destiny awaits thee. Thou must go to Troy with the son of Achilles: thy

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wound.

wound shall be cured. Thy valour shall procure thee the chief honours in the army; with my arrows thou shalt kill the haughty Paris, the author of the war. Troy shall be conquered by thee, and those rich spoils with which thy valour shall be rewarded, thou shalt send to Pæas, thy father, upon mount Oeta. For me thou shalt reserve the presents of the army, and place them on my tomb, as a monument of the victory purchased by my arrows. As for thee, oh! son of Achilles, I declare that thou can'st not conquer without Philoctetes, nor Philoctetes without thee. Go forth then like two lions who seek their prey together. I will send Esculapius to Troy, to cure Philoctetes. Twice have the Gods decreed, that my arrows should conquer Ilion. But when you ravage this wealthy country, remember to venerate religion. Piety is more grateful to Jupiter than all things else. All else must die; but this shall live for ever. It follows us to the tomb, depends not on our fate; but whether we live or die it is immortal.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Oh, voice beloved! Oh, amiable divinity! Again have I the happiness to behold thee! I obey thee, and depart under thy auspices.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I accept the same augury.

H E R C U L E S, *ascending to the skies.*

Delay no longer. The winds invite you. Farewel.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Let us be gone. But first let me bid these scenes adieu. Farewel, dear grotto! Thou nymph of these humid meads, farewell! No more shall I hear these murmuring billows! Farewel, thou shore, where the bleak winds so oft have pierced me! Farewel, ye promontories, where the echo has so often repeated my groans. Farewel, ye cooling fountains, which I never thought to have left! And, lastly, thou Lemnian land, farewell! May my departure be happy, since I go whither Fate, the Gods, and Hercules command me.

C H O R U S.

Thus happily united, let us embark, and implore the Goddesses of the sea to favour our voyage.

OBSERVATIONS

UPON

PHILOCTETES.

THE effect produced by this tragedy, as well as by that of the greater part of the antient dramatic pieces, consists as much in the action and representation as in the poetry and sentiments. Yet I am persuaded, that the bare reading of it made the same impression upon the Greeks as the recital of Philoctetes upon Telemachus in that excellent poem * of the bishop of Cambray. "While Philoctetes was thus relating his adventures," says he, "Telemachus remained as it were suspended and motionless, with his eyes fixed on the great man that was speaking. All the different passions which had agitated Hercules, Philoctetes, Ulysses, and Neoptolemus, seemed by turns represented on the artless countenance of Telemachus. During the course of this narration he sometimes cried out and interrupted Philoctetes, without knowing that he did so. Sometimes he appeared thoughtful, like one that is maturely weighing the consequences of his actions: and when Philoctetes was describing the confusion of Neoptolemus, who knew not how to dissemble, Telemachus seemed to be in the same confusion; at that instant one would have taken him for Neoptolemus himself."

Such was the bishop of Cambray's idea of this piece, and of the emotions it occasioned. And indeed that interest which forms its basis, is no less than the subverting of a kingdom which had resisted the united efforts of all Greece, exhausted its forces, and during a ten years siege had repulsed twenty kings. The Gods at length declare, that the conquest of Troy depends upon Philoctetes and the arrows of Hercules. But how shall this unhappy warrior be prevailed upon to succour the Greeks, on whom he might with justice charge all his misfortunes? This hero is another offended Achilles, whose aid they had occasion for, and therefore must appease him; and we cannot but acknowledge that Philoctetes is not less inflexible than Achilles, and that Sophocles has shewn himself to be equal to his master Homer.

* Telemaque, Liv. xvi.

Neoptolemus is joined with Ulysses in this embassy, a happy contrast, on which Sophocles forms his plot; for the policy of Ulysses, which approaches even to fraud, and the sincerity of Neoptolemus, which is scarce less than simplicity, make up the whole of it. While Philoctetes, suspicious and inexorable, eludes the artifice of the one, and yields not to the generosity of the other; so that there is a necessity for Hercules to descend from heaven, to subdue this ferocious heart. It cannot be denied but such a plot deserved to be unravelled by Hercules.

No piece was ever less loaded with incidents. There are no more than seven or eight principal situations which form the spring of so many various passions, just as a great machine is moved by a few springs. The first situation, after the exposition of the subject, which is concise and artful, is that of Ulysses, who prevails upon Neoptolemus to deceive Philoctetes. Here we see fully displayed the artifice of an old politician, who uses every method his imagination can suggest to engage a young prince to enter into his designs: a prince whose youth, whose generosity, and nobleness of mind, and the example of Achilles his father, had rendered an enemy to every thing that had the appearance of artifice. This is a combat between policy, the great art of monarchs, and true magnanimity. Neoptolemus yields at length to an ardent desire of glory, which is his predominant passion, and the weak place wherein he is attacked. This motive and his remorse for the action he had been drawn in to commit, seem in part to justify him.

In the second situation, we have this prince engaged with Philoctetes. What extreme simplicity is there in the joy discovered by the latter, when he again sees his countrymen! What decorum in his manner of enquiring after the army before Troy! What art in the simple and natural turn Neoptolemus takes to deceive him! Not all the distrustfulness of Philoctetes's temper can hinder him from falling into this snare. The disguised Greek, who interrupts them, makes the third situation; and is a contrivance of the artful Ulysses, (fearful lest he should be disappointed of his prey,) to hasten his departure.

Another essential scene consists in the sudden and unforeseen illness of Philoctetes, which retards his departure. It must be confessed, that this scene requires some indulgence from French readers. On our theatre we could not without pain behold an unhappy hero fall into convulsions, and thus complete the description of the miserable condition to which he is reduced. But if we con-
sider

sider it with a view to the antient manners, we must allow that this method of perplexing the plot and retarding the discovery is finely imagined; and the rather, as it seems to destroy the hopes of Philoctetes, and gives occasion for the repentance of Neoptolemus: For the following scene, where all the difficulties this has produced are fully displayed, depends upon it. It is the compassion of Neoptolemus which awakens his virtue: but his repentance carries him no further than to doubt whether he will restore him the arms which he has gained by an imposition. And this is enough for probability. Ulysses, who was concealed near the place, shews himself very seasonably, to perplex the action by a new incident. He is no longer an obscure politician, who hides himself the better to secure the success of his scheme. The present conjuncture requires that he should declare himself. He does so, and speaks with all the firmness of a hero, and at the same time with an insinuating softness, that might move any one but Philoctetes. "For he knew," says the bishop of Cambray, "that the way to reduce men's passions to reason is not to attack them till they begin to grow languid through a kind of weariness." He therefore gave Philoctetes time for reflection, and all on a sudden passes from severity to gentleness, without departing from his own dignity.

Philoctetes, left alone with the Chorus, and delivered up to his own reflections, displays a heart agitated like the waves of the sea. The return of Ulysses and Neoptolemus changes the whole scene; for the resolution taken by the son of Achilles to restore the arrows, disconcerts the measures of the king of Ithaca, and promises new pleasure to the spectator. There is in this scene a circumstance which cannot fail to shock us. Ulysses, piqued, as he had reason to be, with the conduct and language of Neoptolemus, yet never offers to draw his sword. But, besides that duels were not in use among the ancients, Ulysses, by an unseasonable rage, and which he could not have satisfied in the presence of the Chorus, would have lost all the advantages he expected from his voyage. It is probable enough, that he is not supposed to have heard the last words of his colleague, which are those only he had a right to be offended with, since they reproach him with cowardice pretty plainly.

The generosity of Neoptolemus, who, by restoring the arrows, sees himself constrained to yield to Philoctetes, and to prefer the interest of an individual to that of all Greece, undoubtedly makes

the most shining situation of all. And it is such a one, that there is a necessity for the appearance of Hercules himself to vanquish the stubborn obstinacy of his friend. In the tragedy of Sophocles, Ulysses opposes the restitution of the arms, and Philoctetes is resolved to kill him; but is prevented by Neoptolemus. This stroke is extremely fine. But the bishop of Cambray thought it might be heightened yet more: and his alterations have not been approved. He supposes that Ulysses makes a sign to Neoptolemus to restore the bow, and that Philoctetes in the first emotions of his rage resolves to kill his enemy. "As for Ulysses (it is Philoctetes who speaks in Telemachus) he appeared as unconcerned at my arrows as my reproaches. I was struck with his patience and intrepidity, and ashamed of having endeavoured in the first transports of my fury to kill him, by whom they were restored to me: but my resentment not being yet appeased, I could not bear to be obliged for them to one I so greatly hated."

This idea, spirited as it is, would suit but ill with the turn Sophocles has given his piece. In Philoctetes, Ulysses is not less brave than in the Telemachus, and Neoptolemus is still more generous. The conduct of both would have been inconsistent with their characters, if it had been such as the author of Telemachus has given them. They were ambassadors who were to act differently, according to their different ideas, the one by firmness, the other by gentleness.

If we judge of this tragedy according to the taste of antiquity, it can be charged with no considerable fault: all is connected in it; all well supported; all leads directly to the end. The action is such as it must necessarily have been. But if we judge of it, with respect to our own taste and manners, we shall find a too great simplicity in it, and the predominant spectacle of a wretch so miserably tortured as Philoctetes, will not afford us so lively a pleasure as the more varied and more striking distresses of Nicomede in Corneille.

XX

HIPPOLITUS:

A

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES.

XX

HIPPOLYTUS

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES

The S U B J E C T.

THESEUS, the eleventh king of Athens*, having for reasons of state put Pallas †, his kinsman, to death, condemns himself to banishment during one year, in compliance with a law of the Athenians, and with Phedra his wife retires to Træzen ‡. where Hippolitus his son, by an Amazon §, was educated by his orders under the care of the wise Pittheus §.

This young prince, wholly employed in the study of wisdom, and the amusements of the chase, being a professed foe to love and Venus, drew upon himself the indignation of that Goddess, who, to be revenged on him for his contempt, inspired Phedra with a violent passion for him. Phedra in vain endeavours to conceal her love. The sight of Hippolitus at Træzen gives it new force. Her confidant draws from her a confession of her guilty flame; and, to save the life of her mistress, who had taken a resolution to die, she endeavours to seduce the son of Theseus. Hippolitus rejects with horror the infamous proposal; but being bound by an oath to secrecy, he conceals this shameful adventure, and contents himself with a bitter reproach. Phedra, in despair for the wound given to her reputation, vows to ruin Hippolitus; and to secure herself from reproach, writes a letter to Theseus, in which she accuses his son of having made an attempt upon her honour; when this is done, she kills herself. Theseus, who had been absent for some time, returns immediately after this accident; and being imposed upon by this fatal letter, abandons his son, without any farther examination, to the vengeance of Neptune, who had promised to grant him the accomplishment of these wishes. Hippolitus falls a victim to the credulity of Theseus: but Diana at length clears the innocent youth, and undeceives the miserable father. Such is the subject of this tragedy of Euripides, and the conduct he has observed in it. It was acted with universal applause, under the Archon Epameinon, and obtained the prize, in the third year of the Peloponnesian war; and it is from this circumstance, that it has preserved the title of *Hippolitus crowned*. The poet was then five and thirty years old.

* The capital of Attica, well known.

† He was descended from Pandion, the fifth king of Athens, and had pretensions to the throne.

‡ Træzen, a city of Peloponnesus, situated on a neck of land on the Egean sea, at the extremity of the Argolide.

§ Theseus, in concert with Hercules,

fought a battle against the Amazons, and carried one of them into Greece. Her name was Hippolita, and it was by her that he had his son Hippolitus. Others say, that the name of this Amazon was Antiope.

§ Pittheus, a descendant from Pelops. He was a philosopher, and one of the sages.

It was reported that he was a prophet also.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

VENUS, }
DIANA, } Goddeffes.

THESEUS, king of Athens.

PHEDRA, his wife, the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae.

HIPPOLITUS, the son of Theseus, and of Hippolita
the Amázon.

CHORUS, composed of the ladies of Trezene.

The CONFIDENT * of Phedra.

An OFFICER belonging to the palace.

Another OFFICER.

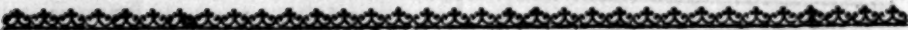
A WOMAN belonging to the palace.

HUNTERS.

The TRAINS of Hippolitus, Theseus, and Phedra.

The SCENE is before the gates of Theseus' palace at Træzen.

* In the Greek she is called the Nurse.



HIPPOLITUS:

A

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES.

ACT the FIRST.

SCENE the FIRST.

VENUS.

AM I that celebrated Venus, in heaven so honoured, so adorned on earth? do I bestow blessings on those who own my power, and quell the insolence of those haughty * rebels that dare despise it? (for the heavenly powers are pleased with the homage that mortals pay them :) and shall the son of Theseus, this offspring of an Amazon, this pupil of the proud Pittheus †, shall he alone, of all the citizens of Træzen, consider me as the meanest of the Divinities? The haughty youth despises love and marriage: satisfied with paying honours only to Diana, whom he exalts above the other Goddesses, he pretends to be exempted from human frailties. Diana has all his adoration; with her he haunts the forests, and knows no other care, but how to let loose his dogs upon the trembling animals he pursues. Perfidious pair, I do not envy ye: why, why indeed, should Venus envy ye? but Hippolitus is guilty in my eyes; and this is sufficient to arm my vengeance. This day shall it fall upon him; a vengeance long before prepared.

When he left the house of Pittheus to be present at a sacred ceremony ‡ at Athens, Phedra, his father's wife, beheld and loved him ||; it was I who kindled in her breast this flame. The absence

* Quels courages Venus n'a-t-elle pas domptés! Racine, Aët. I. Scene I.

† Pourriez-vous n'être plus ce superbe Hippolyte

Implacable ennemi des amoureuses loix, &c.

Ibid.

‡ The ceremony here mentioned, was that which was performed on Ceres' festival,

and was instituted by herself in Attica, as a pledge of her constant protection, in return for the reception she met with there, when she was seeking her daughter Proserpine, who had been carried away by Pluto.

|| Athènes me montra mon superh ennemi. Je le vis, je rougis, je pâlis à sa vue, &c.

Racine, Aët I. Scene III.

of Hippolitus encreased it: she built a magnificent temple, and consecrated it to my name, in hopes of being cured; but scarce had Theseus quitted the land of * Cecrops, bathed in the blood of the † Pallantides; scarce had he entered this country, to perform his vow of banishment‡, when Phedra bathed in tears§, and struck with a disease which she conceals, is seen to consume away in silent anguish. Never, never shall this flame which rages in her bosom be extinguished. Theseus shall be made acquainted with the whole mystery. The enraged father shall load his son with horrid imprecations. Neptune has promised to grant him three wishes. The Gods will doubtless hear him, when he invokes his vengeance on the youth, and thus shall our enemy perish. Phedra indeed is my faithful votary: it matters not; she too must perish. I do not hold her life so dear, to save her with the loss of my revenge. Innocent as she is, I must sacrifice her, that the guilty youth may not escape me: and see, he returns from the chace. His numerous train join in the hymns he sings in honour of Diana: he sings; the victim sings, and knows not that the gates of death are open to receive him; knows not, unhappy wretch, that this is his last day.

|| SCENE the SECOND.

HIPPOLITUS, his Train.

HIPPOLITUS, *singing*.

Follow me, my friends; follow me, and sing Diana's praise;
Diana, chaste and fair, our tutelary Goddess.

The TRAIN of Hippolitus sing.

Oh daughter of Jupiter and Latona, revered Divinity! thou who surpasses in beauty all the Goddesses, who addest new lustre to the bright lamps of heaven, receive our vows and adoration.

HIPPOLITUS.

— And mine, oh fairest of immortal beauties! receive mine also.

* Cecrops was the first king of Athens.

† The descendants of Pallas.

‡ A custom or law among the Greeks, as may be seen by this line, as well as by some verses in the Iphigenia in Tauris: for Orestes, after having killed his mother, banishes himself.

§ Phédre atteinte d'un mal qu'elle s'obstine à taire, &c.

Racine, Act. Sc. I.

|| It is here that the tragedy properly begins, and the first scene is no more than the prologue, which is too circumstantial.

[*He ceases to sing.*]

* Suffer me, oh Goddess, to place this crown upon thy statue †. Deign to accept it from the hands of thy Hippolitus. The flowers with which it is composed I gathered from a smiling meadow, whither no shepherd dares conduct his flocks: sacred recess, which no rude iron yet has violated: only the bee in spring may wander o'er it; a pure stream waters the flowery ground, and virgin modesty reigns ever there. To those only is it open, who have acquired the virtue of which thou art so fond, not from empty study, but from nature herself. They are at all times permitted to gather these charming flowers, prohibited to the profane. Disdain not, then, oh bright Divinity, to let this crown adorn thy flowing hair; this crown formed by chaste hands. Of all mortals, I only enjoy the precious privilege of offering thee this gift. With thee I pass my days; with thee only do I converse: and although my eyes behold thee not, yet often do I hear thy voice divine. Oh Goddess, grant that my life may end as it has begun.

SCENE the THIRD.

To them an OFFICER belonging to Hippolitus.

‡ OFFICER.

Oh prince equal to the Gods, for such we stile our masters, may I presume to give thee wholesome counsel?

HIPPOLITUS.

Speak, I will listen to thee willingly; or else my pretensions to wisdom would be vain.

OFFICER.

Knowest thou the general law by which all mankind is bound?

HIPPOLITUS.

What dost thou mean?

OFFICER.

By this law, pride must be suppressed, and no one mortal must endeavour to exalt himself above all others.

* This speech is a kind of allegory upon the advantages of celibacy.

† Perhaps it is on account of this scene that Hippolitus is called ΣΤΕΦΑΝΗΦΟΡΟΣ the bearer of a crown.

‡ These officers were real slaves. He who speaks makes the same discourse to Hippolitus, as Theramene in Racine.

HIPPOLITUS.

HIPPOLITUS.

I am not ignorant of this truth ; and it is for this cause that pride is odious.

OFFICER.

Dost thou think there is any thing pleasing in benevolence ?

HIPPOLITUS.

Doubtless there is, and the advantages we gain by it are purchased cheaply.

OFFICER.

Do the Gods approve these maxims which we hold ?

HIPPOLITUS.

Certainly they do ; for mankind imitate them.

OFFICER.

Why then dost thou neglect a Goddess?---

HIPPOLITUS.

What Goddess, friend ? take care what name thou dost pronounce.

OFFICER.

It is Venus * whom I mean. Does she not preside at the gates of thy palace ?

HIPPOLITUS.

To chastity devoted, I but at awful distance dare adore her.

OFFICER.

Yet is this Goddess the object of general worship.

HIPPOLITUS.

Men chuse their Gods and their friends. It is inclination which regulates our attachments.

OFFICER.

Thou would'st be too happy, Hippolitus, if thou would'st learn to relish true wisdom.

HIPPOLITUS.

I love not those Divinities who have need of shades and darkness.

* The statues of the Gods at the gates and at the entrances of the houses shewed what tutelary Deities were chosen.

OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Ah, prince, take heed how you offend the Gods.

HIPPOLITUS.

Come friends, enter the palace with me ; prepare the feast. The chase will heighten the pleasure of our repast. Let my horses be taken care of ; and when the feast is over, let them be harnessed to my chariot. I will exercise them myself. [*To the Officer.*] As for thy Venus, she may get another adorer.

SCENE the FOURTH.

The OFFICER.

I however will be more prudent than this young prince ; for it is not for me to imitate his example, and prudence is necessary to my condition of life. Oh divine Venus, I prostrate myself at the foot of thy altar. Pardon, great Goddess, these rash sallies of impetuous youth --- Hear not the words he uttered, for mercy becomes the Gods even more than mortals.

SCENE the FIFTH.

The CHORUS, composed of the ladies of Træzen.

There is a rock at a small distance, from whence issues a crystal stream. There they fill their urns with water : and there one of our * companions was washing purple vestments, which she spread afterwards upon the declivity of the rock, to imbibe the rays of the sun. It was from her I was first informed of the sickness of our queen. STROPHE I.

Phedra, says she to me, shuts herself up in the inmost recesses of the palace ; she lies extended on her bed, she veils her face, and abandons herself to grief. But alas, just now I learn, that this is the third day since she has languished without food or rest, and ANTISTROPHE I.

* These manners are not at all in our taste. A lady goes to a fountain to wash her garments, or at least to talk of news there. Thus Homer's heroes dress their food. I confess it requires some effort of the understanding to reconcile ourselves to manners so different from our own. I shall not amuse myself with defending them on account of the simplicity and innocence

of these happy times, where virtue only, and not luxury, distinguished ranks and persons ; but it is not just, if we condemn the manners, that we should likewise condemn the poet, who in his work has painted them such as they were. We readily pardon the absurdities of the fable, why not then shew some indulgence to the ancient manners ?

tortured with a disease which she conceals from the knowledge of her attendants; she is resolved to die.

STROPHE II. Alas, unhappy queen, what madness rages in thy bosom! does Pan * or Hecate inspire these horrors? or art thou seized with the fury of Cybele or the Corybantes? or punished by the Goddess of the chace, for having neglected to offer sacrifices to her? The power of this Goddess extends over the earth, over Limne †, and over the tides.

ANTISTROPHE II. Perhaps the pangs of jealousy torture thy gentle bosom: does Theseus then prefer to thee in secret some loved rival? Hast thou heard any afflicting news from Crete ‡, thy native country? Or must we impute this languishing and grief to the approaching pains of childbirth?

EPODE. Oh hard condition of our sex! one would imagine that grief, strengthened by our weakness, becomes a habit in us, especially in the pangs of child-birth, from which even the mind suffers. These pangs I have experienced: and then, oh chaste Diana, then have I had recourse to thee. Thou heard'st my ardent prayers, gracious Divinity, and with thy presence asswaged my agonizing pain.

But I perceive a woman advancing towards us: she seems loaded with years. Ha! it is Phedra's nurse. She is leading her out of the palace. Behold, the queen! what a cloud of anguish sits on her face? Oh, how I long to penetrate into this mystery! what secret sorrow can this be, which thus impairs her charms?

* Pan, the God of forests, and Hecate Goddess of night, were supposed to inspire these terrors, which turn to madness, doubtless, because the solitude of thick woods and the gloominess of darkness naturally excited fear: for the ancients had some notions of natural causes. From the God Pan came the saying *pannic terror*. As to Cybele and her priests, the Corybantes, it is well known, that to prevent Saturn's hearing the cries of the infant Jupiter, they used to beat a drum; and their successors, in commemoration of this action, sometimes

abandon themselves to a kind of fury, which they call holy, and which they communicate by contagion to the frightened spectators. They were the fanatics of those times.

† A kind of academy, where the youth of Træzen were taught to ride, and which was consecrated to Diana, the Goddess of hunting. From the word Limne, which signifies a *Morass*, we may conclude, that this academy was situated in a morass, or upon one that had been drained.

‡ Crete, now Candia, the largest island in the Egean sea.

S C E N E

SCENE the SIXTH.

PHEDRA, her CONFIDANT, ATTENDANTS,
the CHORUS.

CONFIDANT.

Oh, how wretched is the life of mortals ! cruel disease ! Well, princess, what wilt thou do now ? what wilt thou not do ? Behold the morn returned ; the morn which thou didst so impatiently wish for. We have brought thee out of the palace : but, alas ! languishing and weak, thou lyest extended on a couch which holds the place of an unquiet bed. No words have passed thy lips, except to bid us bring thee hither ; and soon, too soon, wilt thou return again to solitude and darkness. Restless, disturbed, no object fixes thy desires. The present wearies thee ; the absent * only pleases : how shall we gratify desires which destroy each other ? Surely the sick are much less to be lamented than those who serve them : the former only suffer from their disease ; the latter, besides their grief for these sufferings, are oppressed with labour and fatigue. Unhappy lot of mortals ! incessant cares, anxiety, and grief ; these are our portion. Oh death ! thy shades conceal from us a blessing far more desirable than life ! why are we then so passionately fond of beholding this light, which dazzles us with its false lustre ? Alas ! it is because we are ignorant of that other life ; because, imposed upon by a thousand † fables, we know not what passes in the regions of the dead.

PHEDRA.

‡ Raise me ; support me-- § Alas, my friends, my strength forsakes me--Ah, these idle ornaments || sit heavy on my head : away with them---Let these neglected tresses flow upon my neck.

Imitations by RACINE.

* Comme on voit tous ses vœux l'un l'autre se détruire !

A& I. Sc. III.

† The text here proves, that the Greeks, tho' they believed in the immortality of the soul, and a future state, did not give credit to the fables of the poets upon these subjects. Plutarch, in his treatise of the manner of reading the poets, owns it plainly. It is in the latter part of this work, that

I would intreat the reader to observe what a distinction was made even by the common people between a real and a fabulous religion.

‡ This is nature herself. Perhaps so exact a representation of her would not be pleasing now : but why should it not ?

Imitations by Racine.

§ Je ne me soutiens plus ; ma force m'abandonne.

A& I. Sc. III.

|| Que ces vains ornemens, que ces voiles me pesent !

Ibid.

VOL. I.

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CON-

CONFIDANT.

Resume thy spirits, princess. Why art thou thus disturbed? true fortitude, and a gentle calm of mind, will make thy pain more light. To suffer is the lot of mortals.

PHEDRA.

* Oh place me near some lucid stream! bring me large draughts to quench my burning thirst! --- Ah, why am I not reclined in the thick shade of forests, or on enamelled meads!

CONFIDANT.

What mean'st thou, princess? Alas! remember thou art surrounded with a crowd of women; and that this unconnected language will discover the disorder of thy mind.

PHEDRA.

Why am I not upon the mountains? Haste, let us seek the woods, let us pursue the stag. Oh Gods! why am I not permitted to animate the hounds with my cries, to fling the dart, and let fly the rapid arrow upon the trembling prey!

CONFIDANT.

How strangely are thy thoughts employed! What hast thou to do with the chace? Why dost thou so ardently desire to be seated on the banks of a rivulet? Hast thou not near thy palace clear streams and running fountains?

PHEDRA.

Goddeſs of Limné! thou who preſideſt over the exerciſes of furious horſes †! Oh, why am I not ſeen in the race? myſelf employed in taming the fiery ſteed?

Imitations by RACINE.

* Dieux! que ne ſuis-je aſſiſſe à l'ombre des forêts!
Quand pourrai-je au travers d'une noble pouſſière
Suivre de l'œil un char fuyant dans la carrière!

Act I. Sc. III.

The remainder of this ſcene and the following act will ſhew, that Racine has not carried this beautiful diſorder expreſſed in the words of Phedra, ſo far as Euripides has done.

† In the Greek it is *Venetian Horſes*. The Venetians or Henetes, were a people of Paphlagonia, who, after the war of

Troy, and under the conduct of Antenor, poſſeſſed themſelves, as it was ſaid, of that part of Italy called Venice. They excelled in breeding and dreſſing of horſes. Dionyſius the tyrant was always furniſhed by this people with the horſes he uſed in the equeſtrian combats.

CONFIDANT.

What words escape thee, princess! Eager for the chace, on mountains thou pursuest the stag: a moment afterwards, and thou art in the chariot-race, taming a furious steed. Ah, Phedra, it is not difficult to perceive that thy mind is troubled by some offended Deity.

PHEDRA.

* Ah, what have I said? Whither have I suffered my reason to wander? Reason! I have lost it; it is gone; a barbarous Divinity has rob'd me of it! Oh wretched, wretched Phedra! approach, [*To her confidant.*] give me my veil: hide me, oh hide from the light. I blush for what I have uttered: tears in spite of me fall from my eyes; shame and confusion are visible in my face. Hide me, conceal me, and conceal my shame. Oh sweet, yet cruel madness!—my folly is dear to me, and reason troublesome. No more will I struggle against it; it shall possess me all, and death shall free me.

CONFIDANT.

Princess, thou art obeyed: here is thy veil. Ah, why cannot I die too! age has taught me experience, and too well I feel, that it is better to be insensible to friendship, than like me a victim to it: better to disguise or to suppress this tenderness, than feel its force thus painfully: sorrow like mine it is not possible to support. They who said, that human friendships bring with them more cares than pleasures, said truly, and the wise will ever think so†.

Imitations by RACINE.

* *Insensée, où suis-je? qu'ai-je dit?
Où laissé-je égarer mes vœux & mon esprit?
Je l'ai perdu; les Dieux m'en ont ravi l'usage;
Oenone, la rougeur me couvre le visage;
Je te laisse trop voir mes honteuses douleurs,
Et mes yeux malgré moi se remplissent de pleurs.*

A&I. Sc. III.

† The queen being veiled, and wholly absorbed in silent shame and grief, puts an end to this act in the same manner as if she had gone off the stage: but her presence, tho' she speaks not, has an admirable effect in the following scene.

ACT the SECOND.

SCENE the FIRST.

PHEDRA on her bed, her Attendants, the CONFIDANT,
CHORUS.

CHORUS, to PHEDRA's Confidant.

OH thou, in whose faithful bosom the queen confides her sorrows, thou who hadst the care of her tender infancy, tell us, we intreat thee, what strange disease consumes her!

CONFIDANT.

Alas, I am as ignorant of it as you are. In vain have I pressed the queen to disclose this secret grief: she is obstinately silent.

CHORUS.

Dost thou not know the cause, then?

CONFIDANT.

I do not: the queen conceals all from me.

CHORUS.

Languishing and dejected she appears, and strangely altered.

CONFIDANT.

How can it be otherwise*? She has taken no nourishment these three days.

CHORUS.

Has she then resolved to die?

CONFIDANT.

Most certainly: her conduct shews it plainly.

CHORUS.

Thou amazest me! But how does Theseus bear this?

CONFIDANT.

She hides her grief from him, and tells him she is well and happy.

Imitations by RACINE.

* Et le jour a trois fois chassé la nuit obscure,
Depuis que votre corps languit sans nourriture.

Act. I. Sc. III.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

How! he cannot look on her without perceiving too visible marks of her despair.

CONFIDANT.

Alas, unfortunately for her, he is not here at present *!

CHORUS.

But why dost not thou, since every other method fails, constrain her to disclose this secret anguish.

CONFIDANT.

Alas, I have tried all without success: but I will now employ my utmost zeal; ye shall be witnesses with what ardor I love my sovereign.

SCENE the SECOND.

PHEDRA, the CHORUS, the CONFIDANT.

CONFIDANT.

Come, princess, let us forget all that is past. Be thou less obstinate; drive from thy face these clouds of sorrow; no more indulge this wild despair; and if any word displeasing to thee has escaped me, I will repair my fault. Say, what is it that disquiets thee? Is it a secret of that nature thou canst confide to us alone? Behold we are ready to assist thee. Is it a disease which the disciples of Esculapius can cure? Give us the satisfaction of having recourse to their skill.---Thou answerest nothing---Ah, is this a time to be silent! Yet, if I am to blame, answer me; if I am in the right, take my advice.---Speak, Phedra; look on me at least. Oh this affecting silence! ---- You see, my friends, all my endeavours are useless---deaf as the raging sea to all my prayers: unkind and cruel! † die then, since such is thy resolution; but oh, remember,

* M. Racine likewise copies this circumstance of Theseus's absence, which produces so fine an effect; but he improves upon Euripides, by supposing that this prince is gone with Pirithous to the shades to carry off

Proserpine; and thus gives an occasion for the report that was spread at Træzen of his being dead, on which Phedra founds her wild hopes of gaining Hippolitus.

Imitations by RACINE.

† Vous trahissez enfin vos enfans malheureux,
Que vous précipitez sous un joug rigoureux.
Songez qu'un même jour leur ravira leur mere,
Et rendra l'espérance au fils de l'étrangère,

ber, if thou dost abandon thy children, ere long they will be driven from their father's house. The haughty Amazon has provided a master for them; I mean that son of the stranger; that insolent enemy of our sex, the proud, the fierce Hippolitus.---

P H E D R A.

Ah, that name!

C O N F I D A N T.

Does this thought pain thee, princess?

P H E D R A.

Alas, thou stabbest me to the heart. I conjure thee, by the Gods, no more pronounce that fatal name to me.

C O N F I D A N T.

How unreasonable is thy conduct! This name is odious to thee, and thou hast too much cause to hate it; yet wilt thou not preserve thy life for the interest of thy children?

P H E D R A.

Well dost thou know how dear they are to me---but alas, this heart is tortured with other griefs at present.

C O N F I D A N T.

Ah Phedra *, thy innocent hands have not been dipped in blood.

P H E D R A.

My hands are free from guilt; oh that my heart were so like-wife!

A ce fier ennemi, de vous, de votre sang,
Ce fils qu'un Amazone a porté dans son flanc,
Cet Hippolyte---

P H E D R E. Ah Dieu! O E N O N E. Ce reproche vous touche.

P H E D R E. Malheureuse, quel nom est sorti de ta bouche.

O E N O N E. Hé-bien, votre colère éclatte avec raison;

J'aime à vous voir frémir à ce funeste nom.

Vivez donc. Que l'amour, le devoir vous excite, &c.

A& I. Sc. III.

* Quoi, de quelque remords vous êtes déchirée?

Quel crime a pu produire un trouble si pressant?

Vos mains n'ont point trempé dans le sang innocent,

P H E D R E. Graces au Ciel, mes mains ne sont point criminelles,

Plût aux Dieux que mon cœur fût innocent comme elles!

C O N-

CONFIDANT.

Hast thou indulged a secret triumph over a fallen enemy?

P H E D R A.

Ah no; from a friend's hand this stroke proceeded; unwillingly it was given and received.

CONFIDANT.

Has Theseus injured thee?

P H E D R A.

Oh that I injured him as little!

CONFIDANT.

* What then is this enormous crime, which thou art resolved to expiate by death?

P H E D R A.

Leave me, I conjure thee, in possession of this fatal secret---Be satisfied, it is not any doubt of thy fidelity which forces me to conceal it.

CONFIDANT.

† Unkind! Thou must reveal it, or behold me expire at thy feet.

P H E D R A.

‡ Cease, cease thy importunities: let go my hands: why wilt thou constrain me thus?

CONFIDANT.

Here will I kneel for ever at thy feet, till thou unfoldest this mystery.

P H E D R A.

§ Should'st thou be told my miseries, they would fall on thee.

CONFIDANT.

Alas, what misfortune can I suffer greater than thy loss?

Imitations by RACINE.

* Et quel affreux projet avez-vous enfanté
Dont votre cœur encor doit être épouvanté?

P H E D R E. Je t'en ai dit assez, épargne-moi le reste.

Act I. Sc. III.

O E N O N E. † Cruelle, quand ma foi vous a-t-elle déçue, &c.

Ibid.

P H E D R E. ‡ Quel fruit espères-tu de tant de violence!

Ibid.

§ Tu frémiras d'horreur si je romps le silence.

O E N O N E. Hé, que me direz-vous, qui ne cède, grands Dieux,
A l'horreur de vous voir expirer sous mes yeux?

Ibid.

P H E-

P H E D R A.

|| No, I will die, and dying, preserve my honour, and this fatal secret.

C O N F I D A N T.

If honour requires, that thou should'st die, why wilt thou conceal from me the cause of thy death ?

P H E D R A.

Should I disclose it, that honour would be lost, and infamy would be my portion.

C O N F I D A N T.

But if thou speakest, thou wilt in my opinion be far more justifiable.

P H E D R A.

Leave me, I say ; leave me, I conjure thee, in the name of the Gods ---press me no more : let go my hands.

C O N F I D A N T.

* I cannot, will not leave thee, since thou so cruelly refusest the only reward I ask for my long-tired faith and truth.

P H E D R A.

Rise ; thou shalt be satisfied : thy importunity has conquered me.

C O N-

|| In the Greek it is *ὅτι περὶ*. *Thou shalt die*, or *die*. But it is evident that Phedra speaks of herself here, and not of her confidant. The scholiast also adopts this sense, which is better than, *Thou wilt die, if thou bearest me*.

Imitations of RACINE.

* Réservez-vous ce prix à ma fidélité? A&I. Sc.III.

Madame, au nom des pleurs que pour vous j'ai versés ;

Par vos foibles genoux que tiens embrassés,

Délivrez mon esprit de ce funeste doute.

PHEDRE. Tu le veux, lève-toi. OENONE. Parlez ; je vous écoute. Ibid.

PHEDRE. O haine de Venus ! O fatal colère !

Dans quels égaremens l'amour jeta ma mere !

OENONE. Oublions-les, Madame, & qu'à tout l'avenir

Un silence éternel cache ce souvenir.

PHEDRE. Ariane ma sœur, de quel amour blessée,

Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée !

OENONE. Que faites-vous, Madame, & quel mortel ennui

Contre tout votre sang vous anime aujourd'hui ?

PHEDRE.

HIPPOLYTUS.

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CONFIDANT.

Go on, Phedra, I conjure thee.

PHEDRA.

† Oh, my unhappy mother, with what guilty fires didst thou burn!

CONFIDANT.

How horrid was the object of her impious flames! But why dost thou recal this sad remembrance?

PHEDRA.

My wretched sister too †, the wife of Bacchus!

CONFIDANT.

Why dost thou repeat the misfortunes of thy family?

PHEDRA.

I am the third, and die the most unhappy.

CONFIDANT.

Amaz'd, I hear thee! what will this end in?

PHEDRA.

I have sufficiently explained the source of my calamities.

PHEDRE. Puisque Venus le veut, de ce sang déplorable
Je mourrai la dernière & la plus misérable!

OENONE. Aimez-vous? PHEDRE. De l'amour j'ai toutes les fureurs.

OENONE. Pour qui? PHEDRE. Tu vas ôïr le comble des horreurs.
J'aime.—A ce nom fatal je tremble, je frissonne.
J'aime—

OENONE. Qui? PHEDRE. Tu connois ce fils de l'Amazône.

OENONE. Hippolyte! grands Dieux! PHEDRE. C'est toi qui l'as nommé!

OENONE. Juste ciel! tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace!

O désespoir! ô crime! ô déplorable race! &c. Act I. Sc. III.

† Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, king of Crete, was the daughter of Apollo by one of the Nymphs. The poets feign, that Venus, enraged that the Sun had discovered to the Gods her intrigue with Mars, inspired the whole race of Minos with fatal passions. Pasiphae, they said, was enamoured of a bull, by whom she had the Minotaur, whom Theseus killed in the labyrinth. The history authorized by Plutarch explains this fable thus: Pasiphae was in love with a warrior, named Taurus. The conse-

quence of this passion was a son, who bore the names of Taurus and Minos.

† Ariadne. Minos, in revenge for the death of his son Androgeas, forced the Athenians to pay him a tribute of a certain number of youths, whom he shut up in the labyrinth to be devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus was of this number: but Ariadne, falling in love with him, preserved his life, by giving him a clue of thread, with which, after he had killed the monster, he found his way out of the labyrinth.

HIPPOLITUS.

CONFIDANT.

Yet am I still ignorant of what I wish to know.

PHEDRA.

* Why canst not thou prevent me, and tell thyself what I would say?

CONFIDANT,

Alas, am I a prophetess to penetrate into these obscurities?

PHEDRA.

Knowest thou what----love is?

CONFIDANT.

It has its pains and its delights.

PHEDRA.

Ah, I experience both.

CONFIDANT.

What say'st thou, my queen? Oh heaven! thou lovest, then! who is it thou lovest?

PHEDRA.

Thou knowest the son of the Amazon.

CONFIDANT.

Oh Gods! Hippolitus!

PHEDRA.

It is thou who hast named him, not I.

CONFIDANT.

Just heaven! what have I heard? I am undone! Oh friends, could this have been believed? Life is grown hateful to me: my eyes shall shut out light for ever---Alas, is purity itself dragged into guilt unwillingly? Is it a Goddess that has done this? Ah no; it must be somewhat greater yet that has thus ruined Phedra, her children, and with them my wretched self.

CHORUS.

Good Gods! what has the queen confessed? Oh wretched state! Why did we not expire ere Phedra was tainted with this horrid madness! Alas, unhappy princess, what wretchedness art thou plunged in! Oh mortals born to misery! all now is over with thee, lament-

* This is a very delicate stroke which Racine has not perceived.

ed queen ! thou hast revealed thy shame ! what melancholy days will now succeed to this most fatal one ! what disorders will it bring into thy family ! for alas, we see too plainly, that Venus pours her fiercest wrath upon thee.---Oh wretched, wretched princefs !

P H E D R A,

Ye women of Træzen †, hear me for the last time. Long tedious nights have I employed in searching out the cause of that general corruption which prevails in human life. Mankind, said I to myself, sin not by following nature ; for reason is a sure and steady guide : but such is our frailty, that although pleased with the good, which we all know, yet we neglect to practise it ; some through cowardice, others because they prefer the allurements of guilty pleasures to the solid charms of virtue ; and oh, how many snares does pleasure lay for us ! Idleness, seducing language, evil, so attracting, and a false shame ; I say false, because there is one sort of shame which is needful for us : the other is destructive of the peace and honour of families. If shame was always well placed, one term would not be sufficient to express at once a vice and virtue, things in themselves so opposite. Happy in my own reflections, and fixed in my purpose to be virtuous, I then flattered myself, that no impoisoned breath should have power to corrupt my heart. Would ye, then, form your mind by mine, pursue that conduct which I in secret have pursued. As soon as I perceived the first emotions of a guilty passion, I had no other intention but to struggle against the progress of an involuntary evil. I began by burying it in a profound silence : for the tongue is an unfaithful confidant, which, thinking itself capable of correcting the faults of others, draws on a thousand miseries by speaking. I afterwards made it a law to myself to subdue this criminal desire, and to be chaste in spite of Venus. My efforts against that powerful Divinity at length became fruitless, and my last resource is death. I cannot fear that a resolution so heroic will be blamed : nor can I form a juster wish than to have so many witnesses of my honour, and not one of my guilt. I know how shameful this

† In the Greek, *ye who dwell in this extreme Peloponnesus, the isle of Pelops*. Træzen, *city of Pelops' empire*. Pelops, the son of Tantalus king of Phrygia, went to Elis, married Hippodamia, the daughter of Oenomaus king of Elis, and got possession of the kingdom which was afterwards called Peloponnesus, which is at present called the Morea, and the city was on the frontiers of the dominions of Pelops.

passion is: my sex's modesty makes me feel all its horror. Eternal torments be the lot of that vile woman who first dared to violate her husband's bed. It is from the most illustrious families that this fatal poison has been diffused among the sex; for in the eyes of the vulgar, the examples of the great dignify vice*. Bear witness heaven, how I detest those women who, chaste only in words, conceal their infamous amours under the veil of virtue. How, oh Venus, how do the criminals dare to raise their eyes up to their injured husbands? Are they not afraid that darkness itself, the witness and accomplice of their crimes, should expose them to the day! that the very roofs and walls should find speech to accuse them! Now, my friends, you have heard what has determined me to die. No, it shall never be said, that I have dishonoured my husband, and loaded my children with shame and confusion. No; may they appear in Athens with all the lustre which the unstained virtue of a mother gives. A man, however distinguished by heroic actions, would be reduced to the mean condition of a slave, if he is conscious of any stain derived from the crimes of a father, or the unchastity of a mother. True glory, founded upon virtue, is more precious than life itself. Time, armed with an inevitable mirror, sooner or later shews the wicked; and it is to avoid being of that unhappy number, that I die to-day.

CHORUS.

Oh virtue, how powerful are thy charms! how art thou honoured among mortals!

Imitations by RACINE.

* Je sçai mes perfidies

Oenone, & ne suis point de ces femmes hardies
Qui goutant dans le crime une tranquille paix,
Ont sçu se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais.

Je connois mes fureurs, je les rappelle toutes;
Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces voûtes
Vont prendre la parole, & prêts à m'accuser
Attendent mon époux pour le défabuser.

Mourons. De tant d'horreurs qu'un trépas me délivre.
Est-ce un malheur si grand que de cesset de vivre!
La mort aux malheureux ne cause point d'effroi:

Je ne crain que le nom que je laisse après moi.
Pour mes tristes enfans quel affreux héritage!

Le sang de Jupiter doit enfler leur courage:
Mais quelque juste orgueil qu'inspire un sang si beau,
Le crime d'une mere est un pelant fardeau.

Je tremble qu'un discours, hélas, trop véritable
Un jour ne leur reproche une mere coupable
Je tremble qu'opprimés de ce poids odieux
L'un ni l'autre jamais n'ose lever les yeux.

AA III. Sc. III.

CON-

CONFIDANT.

Princess, I confess, when thou didst first disclose thy secret, I trembled with horror; but now I see the folly of my scruples. Thou knowest the first thoughts which rise in our minds, are more liable to error than mature reflection. This passion then for which thou blamest * thyself, what is there, after all, so new and singular in it? It is an effect of the wrath of Venus. Thou lovest: and is this strange? is not love common to all mortals? and must it lead thee to the tomb? How wretched they whose hearts are touched with this soft passion, if death must be the punishment of their flames! the anger of Venus is an impetuous torrent which cannot be resisted. Yield to her, and she grows calmer: but when she meets with an untractable, haughty, and rebellious heart, how does she treat it, think'st thou? Imperious Goddess! she penetrates the waters and the air: she is the source of all things: it is she who inspires and maintains that passion, of which all human kind are the fruits. Enquire of those who are conversant with the writings of the ancients, and of the poets, they will tell thee, that Jupiter burned for Semele †; that Aurora ‡ did not disdain a

Imitations by RACINE.

- * Vivez, vous n'avez plus de reproche à vous faire;

Votre flamme devient une flamme ordinaire.

Act I. Sc. V.

Hé, repoussez, Madame, une injuste terreur:

Regardez d'une autre œil une excusable erreur,

Vous aimez. On ne peut vaincre sa destinée:

Par un charme fatal vous fûtes entraînée.

Est-ce donc une prodige inouï parmi nous?

L'Amour n'a-t-il encor triomphé que de vous?

La foiblesse aux humains n'est que trop naturelle:

Mortelle, subissez le sort d'une mortelle.

Vous vous plaignez d'un joug imposé dès long-tems.

Les Dieux mêmes, le Dieux de l'Olympe habitans,

Qui d'un bruit si terrible épouvantent les crimes,

Ont brûlé quelquefois de feux illégitimes.

Act IV. towards the End.

† Semele, the daughter of Cadmus king of Thebes. She was beloved by Jupiter, and bore Bacchus to him. Juno, tortured with her usual jealousy, went to to her in the form of an old woman; and taking advantage of her vanity and ambition, advised her to insist upon Jupiter's visiting her in all the lustre of his godhead. Jupiter reluctantly granted her request: he came in the dreadful pomp of thunder and lightning, and Semele was consumed.

‡ The amours of this Goddess are celebrated by the poets. She was at first in

love with Tithon, whom she afterwards changed into a grasshopper, to free him from an insupportable old age, or rather to free herself from such a lover; for she became unfaithful to him, having conceived a passion for Cephalus, a young huntsman, the husband of Procris. Procris, suspecting this amour, hid herself in a thicket to watch her husband, who taking her for a wild beast, killed her with his arrows. He did not yield without difficulty to the passion of Aurora, who, according to Euripides, carried him with her to heaven.

mortal.

mortal lover, and carried Cephalus with her to heaven. Aurora and Semele dwell with the immortal Gods. This is their reward for submitting to their fate; and wilt thou, weak mortal, refuse to yield to thine? Art thou superior to the Divinities, that thou darest despise those laws by which they are governed? How many prudent husbands are there who know, and yet seem ignorant of their dishonour? How many fathers who dissemble their knowledge of their children's youthful amours? for human wisdom consists in saving appearances. It does not suit with the condition of mortals to be severely virtuous. There is nothing pure or perfect here below: those edifices which are built by the greatest architects have still some faulty place. Yet, as thou art in the raging storm of love, how can'st thou escape being wrecked? A mortal, and subject to human frailties, art thou not too happy to have more virtue still than frailty? Quit then, my dearest princess, quit this fatal design: cease to offend the Gods. For wilt thou not offend them, by pretending to be more virtuous than they are. Love, Phedra, since such is the command of Venus, and think only of healing the wound thy heart has received at any price whatever. There are enchantments and mystic words of sovereign efficacy, to calm the fury of this passion: there are more remedies than one for love. My ready zeal shall find the speediest and most effectual: and the subtilty of men shall be too slow in inventing resources for thee, if we women do not discover them *.

C H O R U S.

It must be confessed, oh Phedra, that the counsels she gives thee are soothing, and suited to the state thy heart is in at present; but although our praises shou'd please thee less than her discourse, and should oppose thy fatal tenderness, yet still we must declare,

* This horrible moral is put into the mouth of a slave, who trembles at first at the thoughts of Phedra's impious passion, but afterwards familiarizes herself to it, to save the life of her mistress. Racine has not failed to copy this passage; nay, he has

twice introduced it; the first time with somewhat less indecency upon the false report of Theseus' death, and afterwards more boldly, upon Phedra's confessing to Oenone that she is grieved to find she has a rival.

Imitations by RACINE.

Vivez, vous n'avez plus de reproche à vous faire.

Votre flamme devient une flamme ordinaire.

Thésée en expirant vient de rompre les nœuds

Qui faisoient tout le crime & l'horreur de vos feux.

Hippolyte pour vous devient moins redoutable,

Et vous pouvez le voir sans vous rendre coupable, &c.

that

that the sentiments expressed by thee are far more laudable than hers.

P H E D R A.

It is thus that kingdoms have been subverted, families ruined, by the soft seduction of persuasive tongues. It is not now a time to flatter me, but to animate my virtue, and preserve my fame.

C O N F I D A N T.

What will this pride do for thee, princess? To sooth thy vanity is not the business now, but to heal thy wounded heart. All that remains to be done is to insinuate to him---Believe me, Phedra, I would not come to this extremity, if thou, tortured by a despairing passion, hadst not reached the utmost height of thy misfortune. No one can blame my zeal: for it is not thy passion I assist; it is thy life which I would save.

P H E D R A.

Oh execrable counsels! be silent, wretch. Cease, cease to poison me with thy infamous proposals.

C O N F I D A N T.

They are horrid, I confess; but still they are more advantageous than thy savage virtue, and the crime by which thou art preserved, is preferable to this fierce modesty, which murders thee.

P H E D R A.

Since thou can'st own that thy advice is detestable, tho' necessary, ah, I conjure thee, proceed no farther. I burn, it is true: this fatal love consumes me: but still my virtue's safe; my fame's unblemished. If thou revealest the shocking secret*, thou wilt not prevent my death, but I shall die dishonoured.

C O N F I D A N T.

Hadst thou foreseen it, thou wouldst not have loved; but obey the dictates of thy virtue; I consent thou shouldst: yet thou must grant me a last favour. I have another resource. There are philtres†, which

Imitations by RACINE.

* Je n'en mourrai pas moins, j'en mourrai plus coupable.

Act I. Sc. III.

† The artifice of this vile confidant is plain. She has alarmed the modesty of Phedra, by proposing to her to sound Hippolitus, to remove her fears. She mentions another imaginary resource, which

serves to conceal her real design. Superstition had introduced two sorts of philtres among the ancients, one to inspire love, the other to extinguish it. Over this philtre, whether external or internal, that is over the

which have the power of curing love, without prejudice either to thy reason or thy virtue, provided thou wilt not be obstinate. For it is necessary that I should procure from the object of thy passion a sign, a word, or a piece of his robe, that of two hearts I may make one.

P H E D R A.

‡ Is this philtre external or internal?

C O N F I D A N T.

Why should'st thou desire to know? Suffer me to serve thee, without requiring me to tell thee how.

P H E D R A.

Alas! I fear thy fatal science!

C O N F I D A N T.

Thou dost torture me with thy fears: what is it thou apprehendest now, my queen?

P H E D R A.

Well, since I must own it, I tremble lest thou should'st reveal the execrable mystery to the son of Theseus.

C O N F I D A N T.

Rely securely on my fidelity. Suffer me to act in this as I think proper, and thou, all-powerful Venus, deign to assist me. As for the rest of my designs, it will be sufficient if I engage the help of those friends we have in the palace.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

C H O R U S.

STROPHE I.

Oh love, destructive love! thou whose soft poison steals through the eyes into the heart! Thou who infusest deceitful pleasure into

the drugs which were prepared for that purpose, some sign was to be made, or some word pronounced, which had escaped the beloved object, or they even laid on it a piece of his robe; to which was added a word, a sign, or a piece of the garment wore by the lover, saying, for example, *Thus Phedra loves Hippolitus*, or *thus Phedra hates Hippolitus*, as the confidant would here be

thought to mean. This was called making one heart of two; that is, inspiring them with a mutual love, or mutual aversion.

‡ This question of Phedra's, trifling as it seems, is in this remarkable, that she enters into some kind of composition with her confidant, yet still without consenting that she should reveal her secret to Hippolitus.

those

those bosoms wounded by thy darts! Ah, let me not behold thee armed with all thy fires! The stroke of thunder, the lightning's awful flash, are not so fatal as the invenomed shafts shot by the son of Jupiter and Venus.

Ah, what avails those * hecatombs which we offer to Jupiter ANTISTRO- and to Phœbus, if we refuse to pay a lawful worship to the son of PHÆ I. Cytherea, this tyrant of hearts, this tutelary God of love! Unhappy they, who incur the anger of the powerful Divinity! fatal then the wounds he gives; sorrow, despair and death, are the sad victim's portion.

By him † Iole and her wretched country were undone. Iole, STROPHE II. a happy princess, so long as she was free. He made her miserable by the bonds of marriage. Venus, by uniting her with Alcmena's son, celebrated her fatal Hymen, with the destruction of Oechalia.

‡ Ye sacred walls of Thebes, and thou, unhappy Dirce, are ANTISTRO- lasting witnesses of the implacable rage of Cytherea! By her the PHÆ II. mother of Bacchus was involved in flames, and perished by thunderbolts, in the view of her immortal lover. Venus, like an innocent bee, hovers round mortals; but her impoisoned breath corrupts us soon, even like a nipping wind, that tarnishes the lustre of the fairest flowers.

* *Sacrifices of a hundred bulls.* In the Greek it is instead of *Jupiter*, &c. near the river *Alpheus*; because this river of Peloponnesus watered Olympia in its course, where the Olympian Jupiter had a temple. Phœbus had one dedicated to him at Delphos, under the title of the Pythian Apollo, on account of his having slain the serpent Python.

† Iole was the daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia. Her father promised to give her in marriage to him who should carry the prize in shooting. Hercules being declared victor, Eurytus refused to give him his daughter, which so incensed Hercules, that he ravaged the kingdom of Oechalia, and carried off the princess. But this conquest cost him his life. Dejanira his wife being

jealous, sent him the robe of Nessus, by which fatal present he perished.

‡ Here are two striking examples of the miseries caused by love, and both happened in Thebes. Dirce was married to Lycus, king of Thebes, after he had repudiated his wife Antiope. But the sons of that queen most cruelly revenged the injury done to their mother, and made Dirce repent of having been beloved. They bound her by her hair to the horns of a mad bull: as for Semele, the other example, her history has been already related. Ovid attributes her misfortunes to vanity, and Euripides to love, passions which may be easily reconciled: however, vanity is more durable, and often a stronger passion than the other.

A C T the T H I R D.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

PHEDRA, the CHORUS.

PHEDRA.

ALAS, what do I hear? I am undone.

CHORUS.

With what new misfortune art thou threatened?

PHEDRA.

Be silent: let me listen to these cries.

CHORUS.

We obey. Oh fatal presage!

PHEDRA.

It is done.— Oh love, what miseries hast thou caused me!

CHORUS.

STROPHE I. What mean these tears? May we not know what causes this anguish, these looks of terror?

PHEDRA.

SYST. I. I am ruined. Come nearer to the palace-gates, and you will soon know what cause I have to be alarmed.

CHORUS.

STROPHE II. Thou hast heard it, princess: it concerns thee. Tell us what has happened.

PHEDRA.

SYST. II. The son of the Amazon, the fierce Hippolitus, lets loose his rage upon the unfaithful wretch to whom I confided my unhappy secret.

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE I. Our ears are struck with a confused sound of voices, but the words we are not able to distinguish. Ah Phedra, what does this mean?

HIPPOLITUS.

283

PHEDRA.

Now you hear. This monster, this vile minister of my wild ANTISTR. I. passion, reveals the infamy of Theseus.

CHORUS.

Alas, we hear it but too plainly. Thou art betrayed, my dear- ANTISTRO- est princess. What counsel shall we give thee? The horrid mystery PHED. II. is discovered. Thou art lost.

PHEDRA.

Oh Heaven!

CHORUS.

And this blow comes from the hand of a friend.

PHEDRA.

Barbarous friendship! thou hast served me but too well. Alas, ANTISTR. II. was it necessary that my disease should be revealed in order to cure it?

CHORUS.

What is to be done? What remedy can be found for miseries like these?

PHEDRA.

There is one, and only one, a speedy death; this is my last resource.

SCENE the SECOND.

To them HIPPOLITUS and PHEDRA's CONFIDANT.

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh earth! oh sun! what abominations have I heard!

CONFIDANT.

Dear, dear Hippolitus, be calm.

HIPPOLITUS.

Be calm, after what thou hast uttered!

CONFIDANT.

Prince, I conjure thee, by this hand which now I touch.

HIPPOLITUS.

Vile wretch, be gone! lay not thy profane hands on me.

O o 2

CON-

HIPPOLITUS.

CONFIDANT.

By thy sacred knees, which I embrace, ah do not ruin me.

HIPPOLITUS!

Monster, didst thou not say there was nothing criminal in thy vile proposal?

CONFIDANT.

It matters not what I have said; bury it in oblivion.

HIPPOLITUS.

Shall virtue, when tempted thus, conceal its triumph?

CONFIDANT.

Remember, son, an oath, an inviolable oath, obliges thee to silence.

HIPPOLITUS.

* My tongue has indeed pronounced an oath, but my heart disavows it.

CONFIDANT.

What advantage wilt thou gain by disclosing this secret? Thou wilt ruin thy friends.

HIPPOLITUS.

My friends! Ah I detest such impious friendship; I will have no guilty friends.

CONFIDANT.

Well, it is frailty then; be generous and conceal it. Is not frailty the portion of mortals here?

HIPPOLITUS.

† Great Jupiter, why hast thou plagued us with this dangerous sex? Why must the race of mortals be produced by them? Were it not better to carry offerings of brass, iron, and gold, into thy sacred courts, and purchase children by our piety? No domestic quarrels

* These verses are celebrated by the critics upon Aristophanes, as we shall see in the third part of this work.

† It must be acknowledged, that this declamation of Hippolitus is not very gallant. Euripides did not foresee, that the manners of his country, which appeared to him to be the politest in the world, would one day become ridiculous. And how can we be sure, that by an imperceptible revo-

lution, ours may not experience the same fate, when our French tragedies are as ancient as his? Hippolitus, however, keeps up his character as a philosopher, and Phedra that of a woman, I had almost said slave. The true date of that genius which was predominant among the Greeks when this piece was composed, can only justify this speech.

would

would then have filled our quiet mansions, and interrupted our calm happiness--But we, deluded fools, cherish this source of all our miseries! What does it not cost a father, who has educated his daughter with the most tender care, when he is to part with her to another? A large portion is required to transplant her into a strange family. But alas, what misery is his who receives her? Poor wretched husband! with rich gems and costly apparel, he adorns his contemptible idol, and lavishes his treasure to supply her luxury. For to this sad necessity is he reduced who, dazzled with the lustre of a great alliance, marries an odious woman, and yet must seem to love her. If the wife is reasonable, her relations will be troublesome; but we balance an evil by an appearance of good*. But the man is much less to be pitied who sees every day in his house a plain simple woman; for a witty female is the greatest of human plagues. Preserve me, Gods, from a woman who has more knowledge than it is necessary she should have. The Cyprian queen takes a malicious pleasure in giving subtilty of invention to those who boast of their learning and capacity. Fatal superiority! A woman confined in the narrow sphere of her own moderate understanding, is less liable to depart from the strict rules of virtue. Is it fit a young wife should have confidants? Ah no; let her rather have no companions but mute animals, and by that means prevent their pernicious conversations. For now the ladies form guilty schemes in secret, and their confidants, ever ready to assist their wild desires, expose them to the light. † It is thus, vile as thou art, that thou hast negotiated with me the dishonour of my father's bed. Execrable negotiation! with which my ears have been this moment polluted, and which I can only expiate by purifying myself in some fresh stream. How could'st thou hope, that I would consent to an abominable crime; I who think myself less pure for having heard thee? Go, impious wretch, and know, that a too scrupulous piety saves thy life. Yes it is to those oaths, by which I have unwarily bound myself, that thou owest the effort I make over my just rage, to conceal from Theseus thy horrid proposal. I have promised to conceal it, and I will keep my word: but I will banish myself from this prophane palace, till my father arrives. At his return, I will attend him hither, to mark how thou and Phedra wilt receive him. I would be witness to an audacity that I

* What follows here has, according to our notions, more of comic humour, such as we see happily introduced in the School of women, than the sublimity of tragedy.

† To Phedra's confidant.

have.

have known too much of. May you perish both as you deserve ! My hatred, never to be exhausted, shall from this moment extend to the whole sex ; and let not me be charged with perpetual invective ; the women will always make invective just : let them learn, if it be possible, to keep within the bounds of chastity, or suffer these deserved reproaches *.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

P H E D R A, her C O N F I D A N T, the C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Unhappy sex ! to what are we exposed ? Ah, princess, what now is to be done ?

P H E D R A.

I have merited this outrage. Oh earth ! oh thou bright lamp of heaven ! whither, whither shall I fly ? where conceal my shame ? how bury a detested secret, which is now divulged to him ? What God, what mortal, will by delivering me become an accomplice in my guilt ? My miseries have reached their utmost heighth, and I am the most wretched, the most undone of women.

C H O R U S.

Fatal effect of the vile artifices of a confidant ! Thou art lost without resource.

P H E D R A.

† Oh monster, oh dangerous plague ! thou vile betrayer of too, too credulous friendship ! what hast thou done ? Strike her great Jupiter, immortal father, strike her with thy thunders. Did not I

* It is not surprising, that Euripides should have been considered as a misanthrope, with regard to women. He shadows his own character under that of Hippolitus.

Imitations by RACINE.

† Je ne t'écoute plus. Va-t-en, monstre exécrable,
Va, laisse-moi le soin de mon sort déplorable.
Puisse le juste Ciel dignement te payer.
Et puisse ton supplice à jamais effrayer
Tous ceux qui, comme toi, par delâches adresses
De Princes malheureux nourrissent les foibles ;
Les poussent au penchant où leur cœur est enclin,
Et leur osent du crime applanir le chemin.
Détestable flatteurs, présent le plus funeste
Que puisse faire aux Rois la colère céleste.

Act IV. towards the End.

warn

warn thee, wretch, of what has happened ? Did I not command thee to bury in eternal silence that secret which has drawn this cruel outrage on me ? but thou hast revealed it, and I die dishonoured : for oh, thou forcest me to have recourse to another artifice equally base and wicked. Hope not, that the enraged Hippolitus will be silent ; he will discover my guilty passion to his father ; he will declare it to Pittheus. How infamous will my name be throughout the earth ! Go, leave me --- May'st thou perish, vile woman, and perish all, who like thee, are ready to assist their sovereign's passion, and drag them into guilt unwillingly

CONFIDANT.

Thou art at liberty, O queen, to discharge thy rage on me : thy reason is disturbed, through the violence of thy emotions : yet, if thou would'st permit me, I have much to say in answer to these cruel imprecations *. I have brought thee up, and how faithfully I have ever been devoted to thee, thou well knowest. I have endeavoured to find a remedy for thy griefs ; but instead of curing, I have aggravated them. In what, then, am I to blame ? Ah, if the success had been answerable to my wishes, my zeal would have been otherwise rewarded ! It is the success of our actions alone by which they are condemned or justified.

PHEDRA.

Darest thou contend with me, after the ruin thou hast brought upon me ?

CONFIDANT.

It is not now a time for long discourse. I have been to blame, I confess ; but still thy life may be preserved.

PHEDRA.

Be silent ; I have listened too long to thy perfidious counsels : I fall a victim to them. Hence from my presence, and never let me behold thee more. Let thy own fate employ thy cares ; mine is already determined.

[The Confidant retires in great affliction.]

Imitations by RACINE.

* Songez-vous qu'en naissant mes bras vous ont reçûe.

A&I. Sc.III.

SCENE

SCENE the FOURTH.

PHEDRA, the CHORUS.

PHEDRA.

Ye women of Træzen, grant me the only favour which I now venture to require of your friendship, betray me not.

CHORUS.

We swear, by great Diana, never to reveal thy woes.

PHEDRA.

Secure of your fidelity, hear what I have resolved on, to save my children and myself from infamy: for oh, I cannot think of preserving this miserable life to be a disgrace to Crete, which gave me birth, and to the husband whom I have injured! Thus loaded as I am with guilt, never will I behold Theseus more.

CHORUS.

Alas, what fatal remedy hast thou resolved on?

PHEDRA.

Know, I am fixed to die, and now all that remains to think of, is the means*.

CHORUS.

Oh Heaven! what said'st thou, Phedra?

PHEDRA.

That which you ought to advise me to do; by dying I shall appease the wrath of Venus. True, I expire by the darts of love; but even this death shall give me my revenge: my enemy shall not enjoy the insulting triumph he has promised himself. The ingrate shall be thought guilty in his turn, and shall learn to repress the fierceness of his savage virtue. [She goes out.]

* Or *What kind of death to give myself.* In the Greek, *How I shall die.*

SCENE

SCENE the FIFTH.

CHORUS.

* Oh that I could be transported to the top of some high mountain, or that changed into a bird, I might wing my flight over the Adriatic sea, and to the banks of the Po, where the unhappy sisters of Phaeton shed amber tears. STROPHE I.

I would fly to the rich gardens of the Hesperides, those nymphs whose melodious voices ravish the ear, in a country to which Neptune denies the frightened mariners a passage; for its limits are the heaven by Atlas supported. There flow eternally from the palace of Jupiter the blest sources of ambrosia: and there the earth, fruitful in celestial riches, produces blessings which add to the felicity of the Gods. ANTISTROPHE I.

Oh Cretan vessel, which o'er the bosom of the sea wafted our queen! thou receivedst her from a happy flourishing house, to conduct her to the delusive joys of an unhappy marriage †; for it was under the unfortunate auspices, either of a father or a mother, that she came to Athens. Oh † port of Attica, thou beheldest the STROPHE II.

* The Chorus here fill the stage, while Phedra is gone to kill herself. Full of this melancholly idea, she who speaks for the rest, wishes to be transformed into a bird, that she might fly to those places, which having been the scenes of misfortunes of the same kind, were celebrated by the poets: such for example as the Adriatic sea. Io, the daughter of Inachus and Ismena, being beloved by Jupiter, was by that God transformed to a heifer, to preserve her from the jealous rage of Juno. Io threw herself into the sea, which from her name was called Ionian, and which the ancients believed to be part of the Adriatic sea: and by the voyage of St. Paul to Meleta, which is related in the 27th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we find that in the time of the sacred writer, all that sea which surrounds the coast of Italy was called the Adriatic.

The Chorus afterwards mention the Po, into which Phaeton fell when he was struck with thunder-bolts, and upon the banks of which his sister was changed into Poplar trees, that distilled tears of amber; from

thence they pass to the fortunate islands, where they place the garden of the Hesperides, according to the opinion of some of the ancients, who, to express their fertility, feign that ambrosia flowed from thence. The Hesperides, says the fable, were daughters of Hesperus, the brother of Atlas, and cultivated a delicious garden, where there grew golden apples, which were guarded by a dragon. Hercules killed the dragon, and carried off the treasure. The Chorus say, that Neptune allowed from thence no passage to ships; for they supposed that the heavens were there confounded with the ocean. America was not then discovered. The women of Troezen wished to be transported into this charming land, that they might be removed from those miseries to which they were witnesses.

† The Greeks, who were very superstitious, attributed the misfortunes of children to the unlucky star of their fathers or mothers.

‡ This was the port *Munichium*, where Phedra landed when she came from Crete.

cords which fastened the sad vessel to thy shores, from whence she passed into our regions.

ANTISTRO-
PHE II.

She came, and black presages came along with her: wounded by the relentless hand of Venus, her bosom burned with lawless love, and now she falls a victim to her misfortunes; by her own hand she dies; dies in her nuptial chamber: she abandons herself to her sad fate; and now preparing to extinguish with her life her guilty fires, she resolves to carry all her glory with her to the dead.

~~XX~~

A C T the F O U R T H.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

One of PHEDRA's WOMEN, the CHORUS.

W O M A N.

OH Heaven! hasten hither, whomsoever thou art, haste to the palace, the queen, the wife of Theseus, expires.

C H O R U S.

Alas! the fatal deed is done then; Phedra is no more. She has terminated her sad destiny.

W O M A N.

Oh haste to succour her. Where shall I find an instrument to cut the fatal cord? [*Phedra's woman retires again into the palace.*]

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

Two W O M E N of the Chorus.

F I R S T W O M A N.

What shall we do, my companions? Is it proper that we should go in?

S E C O N D W O M A N.

Where are her officers? It is their duty to assist her. Our eagerness will only add to their confusion and perplexity.

S C E N E

SCENE the THIRD.

An OFFICER of the palace, the CHORUS.

The OFFICER behind the Scenes.

Lay her upon the ground : * stretch out the corpse. Alas, it is a melancholy task to pay the last duties to our masters.

CHORUS.

Poor princess, she is dead. They are stretching out her body:

SCENE the FOURTH.

THESEUS, the CHORUS.

THESEUS, to the Chorus.

Ye matrons of Træzen, I beg you tell me what means this confused noise which I hear in my palace? Ha! the women shriek aloud! I am but just † returned from a long journey, and those my soul holds dearest meet not my wishing eyes. They fly not as usual to receive me with transport. Has any accident happened to Pittheus? His great age, indeed, leaves me no room to flatter myself, that I shall keep him long; yet I confess I cannot think of losing him, without feeling a most sensible affliction.

CHORUS.

Thou hast a greater misfortune to apprehend, prince, than the death of a weak old man. Reserve thy tears for those who are dearer to thee.

THESEUS.

Oh Gods! have I then lost my children?

* This was the first duty the ancients rendered to the dead. Before they wrapt them in linen, they laid them in their natural posture. It was a point of their religion.

Imitations by RACINE.

† Que vois-je! quelle horreur en ces lieux répandue
Fait fuir devant mes yeux ma famille éperdue!

Act III. Sc. V.

HIPPOLITUS.

CHORUS.

Thy children are alive, but their unhappy mother---is no more.

THESEUS.

Oh! what is it you tell me? Is Phedra dead? how was she ravished from me?

CHORUS.

By her own hand she died.

THESEUS.

Oh, all ye heavenly powers! to what was owing this despair, this madness?

CHORUS.

The queen is dead, prince; this is all I know. * We came to the palace to share thy sorrows.

THESEUS.

Oh miserable greatness! Royalty, what art thou? thou can'st not keep misfortune from me. Alas, of what use has my piety been to me? vainly did I consult the sacred oracle---Open [*To his train,*] open the palace-gates. Oh Phedra, once more will I behold thee, dead as thou art.

[*They open the gates of the palace, and shew the body of Phedra covered.*]

CHORUS.

Unhappy queen! what hast thou done? what misery hast thou caused to all who loved thee? Oh horrible effect of the most deep despair! why have thy hands cut short the thread of life? What unknown misfortune has terminated its course?

THESEUS.

Alas, my wife! to see thee thus, what horror! what intolerable woe! Oh fortune, cruel fortune, thy hand is here; heavy it weighs on me, and on my family! or has some Fury struck me? Oh Phedra, into what a boundless sea of miseries has thy death plunged me! never shall I taste of peace or comfort more. Draw aside this covering. I would indulge my grief. Oh let me gaze upon her.

[*The body of Phedra is shewn.*]

Is this my welcome, Phedra? Oh my wife, is it thus I see thee at my return? Like a bird escaped from its confinement, thou

* Here is a very formal falsehood invented to save the queen's honour, and the oath the Chorus gave her to be secret.

takest thy rapid flight to the gloomy God of death. Oh miserable Theseus! ye powers, for what unknown crime committed by my father am I thus punished?

CHORUS.

Consider, Theseus, that such misfortunes are not thy lot only. How many wretched husbands are there who mourn their wives untimely fate!

THESEUS.

Oh, it is past! Phedra, my dearest Phedra, deprived for ever of thy beauties, I will accompany thee to the tomb. Eternal darkness shall hide us both.---Thy death is more fatal to me than to thyself.---Alas, will no one tell me the cause of her despair? What moved her, say, to this unhappy deed? What, none answer? Have I in vain placed so many attendants with her, so many slaves devoted to my service! Oh wretched Theseus! I find at my return a family afflicted, a palace filled with mourning; and for what? for whom? Oh can I think it, can I say it---my wife, my Phedra dead, and my unhappy children orphans!

CHORUS.

Thou hast abandoned us, then, oh loveliest, best of women! Alas, unhappy Theseus, how just is thy affliction! My tears shall wait thee, princess.---But oh, (*Aside*) much do I fear that this is not the last of our misfortunes.

THESEUS.

Oh Phedra, a last embrace thy wretched husband claims--Ha! what do I see? a letter in her hands to me directed!--what would she inform me of? Ah, doubtless, it is a pledge of tenderness left by the dying wife and mother; it contains perhaps her last request. Yes, my beloved Phedra, thou shalt be satisfied: never, never will I think of marriage more; thou shalt have no rival in this heart--Ah, it is her seal! what painfully sweet emotions does this dear remembrance waken!--Now, my Phedra, what does thy love require of me?

CHORUS. (*Aside*)

Alas, what sudden unforeseen calamities do the Gods send us! See the last stroke with which we were threatened. This fatal explanation will ruin for ever ruin this illustrious house. Oh thou, its tutelary Deity, be favourable to our vows, save it, save it if it be possible.

THE-

THESEUS, *after having read the letter.*

Just Gods, how are my woes increased! Can this, can this be born---Oh miserable Theseus!

CHORUS.

Prince, what new misfortune's this? Oh, if it may be uttered, confide in us.

THESEUS.

Oh fatal letter! oh distracting horror! How shall I avoid this torrent of affliction that on every side pours fast upon me! Ah, this unhappy day gives me a double death---Immortal Gods, what have I read!

CHORUS.

Alas, it is the source of all thy miseries.

THESEUS.

Though horrible to thought this guilt, I cannot, will not conceal it. Know then, Træzen, know citizens, that Hippolitus, oh Gods, Hippolitus, fearless of heaven's avenging thunders, has dared---to attempt the violation of his father's bed. But swift and sure revenge * is mine.---Neptune, thou hast promised to grant three of my wishes. Now then accomplish one, one only, and I remit the others---punish my impious son this day. Thus by the speedy vengeance thou wilt grant me, thus shall I know the sincerity of thy promises.

CHORUS.

Ah prince, retract, instantly retract the rash prayer thou hast pronounced. Thou wilt know, and perhaps too late, the injustice of these imprecations.

Imitations of RACINE.

* Et toi, Neptune, & toi, si jadis mon courage
D'infames assassin nettoya ton rivage,
Souviens-toi que pour prix de mes efforts heurtés
Tu promi d'exaucer le premier de mes vœux.
Dans les longues rigueur d'une prison cruelle
Je n'ai point employé ta puissance immortelle.
Avaré de secours que j'attends des tes soins
Mes vœux t'ont réservé pour des plus grand besoins.
Je t'implore aujourd'hui; venge un malheureux pere,
J'abandonne ce traître à toute ta colère;
Etouffe dans son sang ses desirs effrontés
Thésée à tes fureurs connoitra tes bontés.

Sc. II. Act IV.

THE-

THESEUS.

Retract it, no; but I will add to it another punishment. The traitor shall be banished far from this land: if he escapes Neptune; he shall fall a victim to my rage. But the God, in pity to a wretched father, will by his speedy death fulfil my prayers: at least the perfidious wretch banished from hence, shall drag in distant lands a miserable being.

SCENE the FIFTH.

To them HIPPOLITUS.

HIPPOLITUS.

* At the sound of thy dread voice, my father, I hasten'd hither. Alas, thou sighest: may I not know the cause of thy affliction? Oh speak, speak to thy son --- Ha! what do I behold? Phedra dead! Phedra extended at thy feet! amazement! But now I left her well; how did this happen? how died she? Oh my father †, deign to unfold to me this surprising mystery. Thou art silent: in grief, how weak a resource is silence! but is it just that a father should conceal his sorrows from a son who loves and honours him?

THESEUS.

Oh human wisdom, how vain are thy researches! oh mortals, so ingenious to invent new arts, from whose deep penetration nothing can be hid, why are ye ignorant still of that most useful art which teaches knowledge to those dark minds that have not been illuminated by its rays.

HIPPOLITUS.

Happy that master who teaches his disciples to be wise! but oh, my father, this is not a time to fathom the depths of morality. I fear thy griefs disorder thee.

* This scene between Theseus and Hippolytus, with the moving spectacle of Phedra's body, whose death is a silent witness against the young prince, who is ignorant of it, is by far more interesting than Racine's scene of the fourth act, which is taken from Euripides.

Imitations by RACINE.

† Puis-je vous demander quel funeste nuage
Seigneur, a pu troubler votre auguste visage?
N'osez-vous confier ce secret à ma foi?

Sc. II. Act IV.

THE-

THESEUS.

† Why have not men a visible mark by which their hearts may be discerned, and real friends distinguished from the false? Or why have they not all a double tongue at least, that one of which, sincere and just, might in spite of them discover the impostures of the other, and hinder us from being deceived?

HIPPOLITUS.

Alas, my father, I perceive ‡ that some one has injured me in thy opinion---I am innocent, and I suffer the punishment of guilt---surprize and terror seize me at thy words.

THESEUS.

Oh Heaven! to what heights of pride, of insolence and temerity, will the human mind arrive? If the race of mortals still increase in vice, and sons are more wicked than their fathers, the Gods must create another world, for this will not contain them. Behold this son by whom I am dishonoured! The queen has in her death convicted him. * Traitor! how darest thou appear before me, after the impious crime thou hast committed? But thou art raised above human frailties: thy pure virtue was never yet sullied with a suspicion; thou holdest commerce only with the Gods. Perfidious wretch, no more shalt thou deceive me with such false pretences. I reverence the Gods too much to think impiety like thine could e'er enjoy their favour. § Now boast of thy temperance

Imitations by RACINE.

† Faut-il que sur le front d'une profane adultère
Brille de la vertu le sacré caractère?
Et ne devoit-on pas à des signes certains
Reconnoître le cœur des perfides humains?

Sc. II. A & IV.

‡ Un tel excès d'horreur tend mon ame interdite,
Tant de coups imprévus m'accablent à la fois,
Qu'ils m'ôtent la parole, & m'étouffent la voix.

Ibid.

* Perfide, oses tu bien te montrer devant moi;
Monstre, qu'a trop long-tems épargné le tonnerre, &c.
Oui, c'est ce même orgueil, lâche, qui te condamne, &c.

Ibid.

Ibid.

§ Here are two strokes of satire, one against the Pythagoreans, who held the doctrine of the Metempsychosis or transmigration of the souls of men into the bodies of beasts, and therefore abstained from eating the flesh of any animal whatever. The other against

those philosophers by profession, with which Athens swarmed, and who were hypocrites at bottom. Lucian has since painted them with great humour. Orpheus, was in the opinion of Euripides, the father of philosophers. However, it is very probable, that this

rance, abstain from the flesh of animals, trace in thy mind the founding precepts of Orpheus, grow giddy with the fumes of a vain science, and under the veil of an affected philosophy, practice the sordid arts of hypocritic sages--Pernicious sect! dangerous seducers! who under soothing words, conceal the poison of corrupted hearts. * Phedra is dead: but do not hope that her death shall save thee ---- no, wretch, it leaves thee without excuse. What arguments can have force against this fatal witness? (*pointing to the body of Phedra.*) Wilt thou alledge, that the son of the Amazon was hated by the queen? † She must have set but little value on her life, if to her hatred of thee she sacrificed it. Perhaps, too, thou wilt alledge the sex's frailty; but too well do I know, that the impetuous passions of youth are more dangerous still than that sex. In such as thou, confidence supports criminal desires---But why do I seek to convict thee by my reasonings?--see this dumb ‡ evidence that pleads against thee. || Fly instantly from this land: I banish thee for ever from these walls built by Minerva, and from every place obedient to my rule. If Theseus thus outraged by an impious son should be unrevenged, Sinis §, that famed Corinthian robber, might rise again, and

that this raillery upon the philosophers was a piece of art. Euripides, the friend of Socrates, and educated in the bosom of philosophy, was concerned to silence Aristophanes and his enemies upon this article.

Imitations by RACINE.

- * Traître tu prétendois qu'en un lâche silence
Phédre enseveliroit ta brutale insolence,

† Dido has this thought in the epistle Ovid makes her write to Æneas:

“ Exerce pretiosa odia & constantia magna,
“ Si dum me careas est tibi vile mori.”

“ Your hatred costs you dear, if death appears a trifle to you, provided you quit me.”

Imitations by RACINE.

- ‡ Fuis, & si tu ne veux qu'un châtement soudain
T'ajoute aux scélérats qu'a punis cette main,
Prends garde que jamais lastre qui nous éclaire
Ne te voye en ces lieux mettre un pied téméraire.
Fuis, dis-je, & sans retour précipitant tes pas
De ton horrible aspect purge tous mes états.

Sc. II. Act IV.

|| Athens.

§ Sinis and Sciron were two remarkable robbers, from whom Theseus delivered Greece. The former had his habitation near Corinth, and those persons whom ei-

Vol. I.

ther by force or stratagem he got into his power, he put to a most barbarous death. He bent two trees which grew near each other to the earth, and bound the unhappy victim to them, who was torn in pieces when

Q q

the

and reproach me with an useleſs triumph over him. Thoſe rocks which the ocean ſaw take their riſe from the bones of Sciron, ſhall no longer be a teſtimony to the whole univerſe, that Theſeus is the ſcourge of lawleſs men.

C H O R U S.

Who among mortals can be called happy, when we ſee the fortune of our monarchs ſubject to ſuch fatal revolutions ?

HIPPOLITUS.

* Thus loaded with thy rage and imprecations, I might, oh father, I might tell thee, that if this affair was thoroughly examined, the conſequence would be favourable to thy ſon: but no; the horrid ſecret ſhall never be revealed. † I am perhaps ſufficiently capable of diſputing with my equals; but I feel myſelf abaſhed, when I am to ſpeak before ſo many witneſſes; nor indeed are thoſe held in much eſteem by the truly wiſe, who boaſt the uſeleſs graces of their eloquence. But thus oppreſſed, I am forced to break ſilence. Let me begin, then, by that accuſation ſo impious, ſo full of horror, that thou thought'ſt the bare mention of it would ſtrike me dumb. ‡ Bear witneſs, heaven and earth,
bear

the trees were ſuffered to return to their natural ſituation. Others ſay, that he had a very ſhort bed, upon which he obliged travellers to lye, and cut off their limbs to fit them to the ſize of it. Theſeus put him to death in the ſame manner. Sciron, the other robber, dwelt near Megare, and uſed

to throw all thoſe who paſſed that way into the ſea. Theſeus threw him in alſo; and his bones, ſays the fable, were changed into rocks. Theſeus, after the firſt expedition, reſtored the Iſthmian games at Corinth. They had been inſtituted by Sifyphus king of Corinth, but diſcontinued.

Imitations by Racine.

* D'un menſonge ſi noir juſtement irrité
Je devrois faire ici parler la vérité,
Seigneur; mais je ſupprime un ſecret qui vous touche
Approuvez le reſpect qui me ferme la bouche.

Sc. II. A& IV.

† This ſpeech favours a little of the philoſopher and orator; but it muſt be remembered, that this was the taſte of the

Athenians. They were great philoſophers, and great declaimers, eſpecially in the hands of Euripides.

Un tel excès d'horreur rend mon ame interdite,
Tant de coups imprévus m'accablent à la fois,
Qu'ils m'ôtent la parole & m'étouffent la voix.

Imitations by RACINE.

‡ Examinez ma vie, & ſongez qui je ſuis
Quelques crimes toujours précèdent le grands crimes;
Quiconque a pû franchir les bornes légitimes
Pent violer enfin les droits les plus ſacrés.
Ainſi que la vertu, le crime a ſes degrés :

Et

bear witness to the purity of my heart ; my still untainted youth is spent in honouring the Gods, and cultivating friends, whose virtue renders them alike incapable of committing crimes themselves, or soothing the vicious passions of another. Whether absent or present, I feel for them the same unchanged affection, nor know I yet the pernicious art of slandering others. Alas, how is it possible, that I should be guilty of the horrid crime with which thou chargest me ! my heart, hitherto proof against the darts of Venus, knows love but by its name, and by those representations we have of it : yet my eyes, chaste as my heart, gaze not upon such profane pictures. If my past conduct will not justify me in thy thoughts, it is thy part to prove the possibility of my having acted so inconsistent with it. What powerful charms in the wife of my father could subdue a heart proof against beauty ! By what views of advantage could Hippolitus be induced to betray Theseus ? What folly ! what madness ! to hope that by committing a detested crime, I should succeed a living father in his throne ? Has a sceptre then such allurements for a mind devoted to the study of wisdom ? Ah no ; the lustre of a crown dazzles not her votaries. It is well known, that I despise even those wreaths which bind the brows of victors in the Grecian games. Contented with the peaceful life I lead, and happy in the society of virtuous friends, my ambition reaches no higher than to enjoy the next rank to my father. No, witness ye powers, I would not exchange this calm private happiness for the shining dangers of a throne. One word more, my father, and I have done : were Phedra alive, could I defend myself in her pre-

Et jamais on n'a vu la timide innocence
 Passet subitement à l'extrême licence,
 Un jour seul ne fait point d'un mortel vertueux
 Un perfide assassin, un lâche incestueux.
 Elevé dans le sein d'une chaste Héroïne
 Je n'ai point de song sang démenti l'origine.
 Pithée estimé sage entre tous les humains
 Daigna m'instruire encore au sortir de ses mains.
 Je ne veux point me peindre avec trop d'avantage ;
 Mais si quelque vertu m'est tombée en partage,
 Seigneur, je croi sur-tout avoir fait éclatter
 La haine des forfaits qu'un ose m'imputer.
 C'est par-là qu'Hippolyte est connu dans le Grèce,
 J'ai poussé la vertu jusques à la rudesse.
 On sçait de mes chagrins l'inflexible rigueur ;
 Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fonds de mon cœur.
 Et l'on veut qu' Hippolyte épris d'une feu profane.

Sc. II. Act IV.

sence, thou would'st soon discover which of us was guilty ; * and now, for the last time, I attest that Jupiter whom the perjured dread, I attest this earth on which I stand, that far from committing the crime thou hast accused me of, the guilty with ne'er tainted my heart --- Oh, if I am not innocent, may I expire loaded with shame and infamy ! may I be doomed to endless wanderings, and find no shelter, no asylum, and may I be denied a tomb by earth and sea ! As for the queen, I know not if it was her fear which determined her to die. I must be silent on this article ; † yet I will say, it is strange, that thou who knowest the natural frailty of the sex, should hold her innocent, and that I whose manners have been yet untainted, should appear criminal in thy eyes !

CHORUS to Hippolitus.

Thou hast sufficiently cleared thyself, young prince : the Gods are never attested in vain ; thy oath absolves thee.

THESEUS.

‡ What ! does the deluder hope to dazzle me with his impostures ? What faith can I give to the oaths of a traitor, who has dishonoured me ?

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh my father, thus cruelly prejudiced against me, this moderation is surprising. Hippolitus, were he in thy place, would not balance a moment, whether he should plunge a poniard into the bosom of an adulterous and incestuous son. Exile is too light a punishment for a crime so execrable.

Imitations by RACINE.

- * Hé quoi, de votre erreur rien ne peut vous tirer !
Par quels affreux sermens faut-il vous rassurer ?
Que la terre, le ciel, que toute la nature—

Sc. II. A& IV.

- † Vous me parlez toujours d'inceste & d'adultère ;
Je me tais ; cependant Phédre sort d'une mere,
Phedre est d'un sang, Seigneur, vous le sçavez trop bien,
De toutes ces horreurs plus rempli que le mien.

Ibid.

This is very bold in a son, who is speaking to his father. The Greek poet makes Hippolitus more respectful.

Imitations by RACINE.

- ‡ Toujours les scélérats ont recours au parjure.
Cesse, cesse, & m'épargne un importun discours,
Si ta fausse vertu n'a point d'autre secours.

Ibid.

THE-

THESEUS.

Thou hast pronounced thy sentence: but no; the cheat's too gross. The death thou wouldst impose upon thyself, would be a blessing to thee. Death is the last refuge of the miserable: but thou shalt die by a more tedious punishment; banished from thy country, thou shalt in distant lands, languish in ceaseless sorrow. Such is the punishment due to impiety.

HIPPOLITUS.

* Ah, what hast thou resolved, my father? Wilt thou not wait till time has proved my innocence? Wilt thou then banish me?

THESEUS.

Wert thou beyond the ocean and mount Atlas, still would my vengeance be unsatisfied.

HIPPOLITUS.

Will neither the innocence of my manners, nor the awful oath I have pronounced, plead in my favour? and without consulting the sacred oracles, without even convicting me thyself, wilt thou, my father, banish me for ever from thy presence?

THESEUS.

This letter, this fatal letter, needs no interpreter. Behold my oracle, behold the witness that condemns thee---No, I will not consult the flight of birds---Their delusive testimony can make no impression upon me.

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh ye immortal powers! still, still shall I conceal the horrid secret! I am innocent, I adore and venerate you, and you suffer me to perish! But I will, I will be silent: and oh, why should I speak? my father will not listen to my defence, and I should violate my oath in vain.

THESEUS.

† Traitor, wilt thou go on to aggravate my rage by thy dissimbled virtue? Hence from my presence, and quit Træzen.

Imitations by RACINE.

HYPOLITE. * Quel tems à mon exil, quel lieu prescrivez-vous?

THESEE. Fusses-tu par-delà les Colonnes d'Alcide,
Je me croirois encor trop voisin d'un perfide.

Sc. II. A& IV.

THESEE. † Ah, que ton impudence exite mon courroux!

Ibid.

HIPPOLITUS.

HIPPOLITUS.

* Alas, thus loaded with imputed guilt, whither shall I direct my steps? What friend will now vouchsafe me an asylum?

THESEUS.

† They will receive thee, they who honour adulterers, and the accomplices of guilt.

HIPPOLITUS.

Am I not sufficiently punished by thy hatred? Am I not already too wretched in being thought guilty by my father?

THESEUS.

Weepest thou, perfidious wretch! then should'st thou have wept, then should'st thou have dreaded the consequence of thy fatal passion, when thy vile heart conceived the impious design of violating thy father's bed.

HIPPOLITUS.

Ye conscious walls, and oh, thou palace of my ancestors, bear witness to my innocence.

THESEUS.

Hast thou recourse to mute witnesses! behold one then [*Pointing to Phedra.*] Ah, thou speechless evidence, too plainly dost thou convict him.

HIPPOLITUS.

Could I behold another thus injured and oppressed, how would my bosom bleed for the wretched sufferer!

THESEUS.

Traitor, it would; because thy disssembled candor, and love of justice, would not suffer thee to be as cruel to thyself as to those who gave thee birth.

Imitations by RACINE.

HIPPOLYTE. * Chargé du crime affreux dont vous me soupçonnez,
Quel amis me plaindront si vous m'abandonnez?

THESEE. † Va chercher des amis dont l'estime funeste
Honore l'adultère, applaudisse à l'inceste,
Des traîtres, des ingrats, sans honneur & sans loi,
Dignes de protéger un méchant tel que toi.

HIP-

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh wretched mother of a wretched son! How ought that miserable youth be to lamented who owes, like me, his birth to a stranger!

THESEUS.

* Guards, force him hence; drive him to banishment. Hast thou not heard the sentence I have so oft pronounced?

HIPPOLITUS.

Unwilling they obey the harsh command. Alas, they weep to touch me---Oh my father, since thou art deaf to the cries of innocence, drag me hence thyself.

THESEUS.

Traitor, I will, if thou dost not instantly obey me. From this moment my heart is shut against thee.

[He retires into the palace.]

SCENE the SIXTH.

HIPPOLITUS, the CHORUS.

HIPPOLITUS.

All hope is lost; my sentence is irrevocable. Wretched as I am, I dare not prove my innocence. Oh, daughter of Latona, Divinity by me supremely worshipped! Oh, my soft consolation, divine companion of those only pleasures in which I indulged my guiltless youth, ah, never more must I return to Athens! But it is not Athens, it is not the land of † Erechtheus which I regret: it is thou Træzen, it is thou, delightful scene of all my innocent amusements, which I quit with grief. Receive my last farewell! Hippolitus shall never more behold thee! And you, my virtuous friends, to whose sweet society Træzen owed its charms, support

Imitations by RACINE.

- * Quoi ta rage à mes yeux perd toute retenue!
Pour la dernière fois ôte-toi de ma vue.
Sors, traître, n'attends pas qu'un père furieux
Te fasse avec opprobre arracher de ces lieux.

Sc. II. Act IV.

† Erechtheus, the sixth king of Athens. monies and games in honour of that goddess
It was in his reign that Ceres taught the were first instituted.
Athenians to plant corn, and that the cere-

me,

me, oh support me with your tender consolations ! Conduct this wretched exile hence---and be assured, that tho' accused, tho' banished by a relentless father, I am innocent.

SCENE the SEVENTH.

The CHORUS.

STROPHE I. When we reflect that we live under the government of the Gods, our hearts lose their fears and their inquietudes : but when we take a view of men's fortunes, and their actions, the vicissitudes of the former, the errors of the latter, all our prudence forsakes us, and hope is no more.

ANTISTROPHE I. Grant us, kind Heaven, a life uniformly happy, a mind free from anxiety, and a fame unstained, though not illustrious ! Need we form a farther wish to make our days glide on in peace and safety ?

STROPHE II. Alas, we were not born to taste this peaceful calm, this soft serenity. All hope of happiness is lost. The shining star of Athens, the young, the lovely, and the virtuous Hippolitus is banished by the stern decree of an enraged father. Ye shores of Træzen, ye forests, ye mountains, which he and the immortal huntress used to frequent, in vain do you invite him back : Hippolitus will haunt your solitudes no more.

ANTISTROPHE II. Ill-fated prince, no more shall we behold thee seated on thy car, governing thy furious coursers in the lists of Limné. Dumb now that lute from whence thou called'st forth such melting airs, and didst fill with harmony the palace of thy father. No crowns henceforth shall grace Diana's altars, no fresh flowers be strewed around them, their places scarce distinguished, and buried underneath the springing grass. Banished from Træzen, the nymphs no longer shall dispute thy heart : the hope of such a glorious conquest shall no more excite the rage of jealousy in their tender bosoms.

EPODE. Thee we lament, Hippolitus ; for thee our tears shall never cease to flow. Oh wretched Amazon ! the mother of a prince so lovely and unfortunate, where is now thy triumph ! Taught by this sad example, may we never speak with irreverence of the Gods. Oh ye celestial graces, ye who have the power of conciliating hearts, why, why did ye permit the innocent Hippolitus to be banished from his palace, and the country which gave him birth ?

A C T

A C T the F I F T H.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

An OFFICER belonging to Hippolitus, two Persons of the CHORUS.

CHORUS.

HA! one of the prince's officers directs his hasty steps toward the palace! terror and amazement are in his looks.

OFFICER.

Say quickly, where is Theseus? Where shall I find the king?

CHORUS.

See, he appears.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

THESEUS, the OFFICER, the CHORUS.

OFFICER.

I come, great prince, to bring thee most afflicting news for Athens and Trœzen.

THESEUS.

What new misfortune threatens these cities? Speak.

OFFICER.

The prince expires this moment.

THESEUS.

What hand has struck the blow? Ha! is he not punished by some stranger, whom he would have dishonoured as he has done his father?

OFFICER.

Thy imprecations, which by thy father Neptune have been too faithfully accomplished, have caused his death.

THESEUS.

Righteous Heaven ! Oh Neptune, favourably hast thou heard my prayers : it is now that I acknowledge thee to be indeed my * father. Relate the manner of his death : say, has † Nemesis punished this incestuous son ?

OFFICER.

Myself, with the rest of his attendants, were near the shore, busy in the care of his steeds : tears flowed from every eye ; for already had we heard the afflicting news of his banishment. Hippolitus came to us at length ; his grief confirmed the fatal tidings. He was followed by all the youth of Træzen, who mourned his fate with sighs and tears. The prince, stifling his sorrows, turned towards them, “ Why, said he, do you lament my exile thus ? “ My father dooms me to it, and I obey. Harness the horses to “ my chariot : Træzen and I must part.” His orders were instantly obeyed ; the chariot was brought, he threw himself into the seat, and grasping the reins, he raised his eyes and hands to heaven : “ Oh “ Jupiter, cried he, if I am guilty, let thy thunders strike me “ dead ; but whatever is that fate to which thou doomest me, “ whether I live or die, let my father be convinced that he has “ punished me unjustly.” At that moment he lashed the fiery steeds ; we followed the chariot at a little distance, and took the road to Argos and Epidaurus ‡. Scarce were we entered the desert, when a shore over-against Træzen §, and near the Saronic gulph, offered itself to
our

* Neptune was the patron of Athens ; and Theseus instituted games to his honour, in imitation of those celebrated by Hercules in honour of Jupiter. Theseus was the son of Ethra by Neptune or Egæus.

† The Goddess of vengeance, or justice. See the opinion of the abbé Fraguier, upon imprecations tho’ unjust. Vol. V. of the History of the academy of inscriptions and belles lettres.

‡ Epidaurus, a city of Peloponnesus in Argolide, upon the Saronic gulph, now

called Engia. There was a temple there dedicated to Esculapius, the God of physic.

§ Træzen, as we find by the maps, advances into the sea. As there are doubtless many readers who would be glad to have an opportunity of comparing Racine’s description of Hippolitus’ death, with this of Euripides, I have chosen to give the whole passage here, rather than those imitations only of the Greek poet, which are immediately discerned.

Imitations by RACINE.

A peine nous sortions des portes de Trézène,
Il étoit sur son char. Ses gardes affligés
Imitoient son silence autour de lui rangés.
Il suivoit tout pensif le chemin de Mycènes ;
Sa main sur ses chevaux laissoit flotter les rênes.

our view. Here, on a sudden, we heard a horrid noise, which proceeded from the bosom of the sea, less terrible to mortal ears than the voice of Jupiter himself, the sovereign master of the Gods. The horses started back, their hairs and ears rose with the fright; amaze-

Ces superbes courriers qu'on voyoit autrefois
Pleins d'une ardeur si noble obéir à sa voix,
L'œil morne maintenant & la tête baissée,
Sembloient se conformer à sa triste pensée.
Un effroyable cri sorti du fonds des flots
Des airs en ce moment a troublé le repos,
Et du sein de la terre un voix formidable
Répond en gémissant à ce cri redoutable.
Jusqu'au fond de nos cœurs sang s'est glacé,
Des courriers attentifs le crin s'est hérissé.
Cependant sur le dos de la plaine liquide
S'élève à gros bouillons une montagne humide;
L'onde approche, se brise, & vomit à nos yeux
Parmi des flots d'écume un monstre furieux.
Son front large est armé de cornes menaçantes,
Tout son corps est couvert d'écailles jaunissantes,
Indomptable Taureau, dragon impétueux,
Sa croupe se recourbe en replis tortueux:
Ses longs mugissemens font trembler le rivage:
Le ciel avec horreur voit ce monstre sauvage,
La terre s'en émeut, l'air est en infecté;
Le flot qui l'apporta rerule épouvanté.
Tout fuit & sans s'armer d'un courage inutile
Dans le temple voisin chacun cherche un asyle.
Hippolyte lui seul, digne fils d'un héros,
Arrête ses courriers, saisit ses javelots,
Pousse un monstre, & d'un dard lancé d'une main sûre
Il lui fait dans le flanc une large blessure.
De rage & de douleur le monstre bondissant
Vient aux pieds des chevaux tomber en mugissant,
Se roule & leur présente une gueule enflammée
Qui les couvre de feu, de sang & de fumée:
La frayeur les emporte, & sourds à cette fois
Ils ne connoissent plus ni le frein ni la voix.
En efforts impuissans leur maître se consume:
Ils rougissent le mors d'une sanglante écume.
On dit qu'on a vu même en ce désordre affreux
Un Dieu, qui d'aiguillons perçoit leur flanc poudreux.
A travers les rochers la peur les précipite:
L'essieu crie & se rompt. L'intrépide Hippolyte
Voit voler en éclats tout son char fracassé.
Dans les rênes lui-même il tombe embarrassé.
Excusez ma douleur. Cette image cruelle
Sera pour moi de pleurs une source éternelle.
J'ai vu, Seigneur, j'ai vu votre malheureux fils

amazement seized us; yet were we curious still to know the cause of what we heard. Long we were not left in doubt: we turned our eyes toward the shore, and beheld a wave rise to such an enormous heighth, that it hid Corinth, Epidaurus, the temple of Esculapius, and the rocks of Sciron, from our view. Still its bulk increased; it reached the clouds; and advancing to the shore, which it covered with its foam, there bursting like a storm, it left upon the sand a furious monster, an enormous bull, whose horrid bellows made all the neighbouring coasts resound: a sight so full of terror, no human eye e'er yet beheld. The horses were instantly seized with affright. The young prince, skilful in the art of managing a chariot, suddenly grasped the reins, and, straining back, drew them with all his force, as a pilot directs his helm. But the terrified coursers champ'd the bit; and, now grown furious, they no longer knew either the chariot, the reins, or their master's guiding hand. When the prince directed his course along the plain, suddenly the monster presented himself before the horses, who, wild with fear, ran back; if their master turned them towards the rocks, the monster glided by the side of the chariot, to precipitate their course. At length the wheels were crushed against the rocks, the chariot was broke to pieces, and Hippolitus overthrown. The ground was strewed with the fragments of the broken chariot. Mean time, the

Trainé par les chevaux que sa main a nourris :
 Il veut les rappeler, & sa voix les effraye :
 Ils courent : tout son corps n'est bientôt qu'une playe ;
 De nos cris douloureux la plain retentit :
 Leur fougue impétueuse enfin se ralentit :
 Ils s'arrêtent non loin de ces tombeaux antiques
 Où des Rois vos ayeux sont les froides reliques.
 J'y cours en soupirant, & sa garde me suit ;
 De son généreux sang la trace nous conduit ;
 Le rochers en sont teints : les ronces dégoutantes
 Portent deses cheveux les dépouilles sanglantes.
 J'arrive, je l'appelle, & me tendant la main
 Il ouvre un œil mourant qu'il referme soudain.
 " Le ciel, dit-il, m'arrache une mourante vie ;
 " Prends soin après ma mort de la triste Aricie,
 " Cher ami ; si mon pere un jour désabusé
 " Plaint le malheur d'un fils fausement accusé,
 " Pour appaiser mon sang, & mon ombre plaintive,
 " Dis-lui qu'avec douceur il traite sa captive,
 " Qu'il lui rende"---à ces mots ces héros expiré
 Ne laisse dans mes bras qu'un corps défiguré,
 Triste objet où des Dieux triomphe la colère,
 Et que méconnoîtroit l'œil même de son pere.

unhappy

unhappy prince, bound and entangled in the reins, was dragged along the rocks, which bruised his head, and mangled all his limbs. "Ah, stop, he cried, in a most moving tone, stop, my loved coursers, whom this hand so oft has fed! ah know your master, and do not become my murderers. Oh, my father, this is the effect of thy most fatal imprecations! hasten, said he to us, hasten, and succour an innocent, tho' wretched son." Alas, eager to give him help, we needed not his cries to animate us: but our feet ill seconded our zeal to save him. At length, disentangled from the reins, which by some happy chance were broke, Hippolitus, scarce breathing, lay extended on the ground. At that instant, the horses and the monster disappeared behind the mountains. Alas, oh Theseus, I am devoted to thee as my master and my king, yet will I dare to speak the truth; so well I know the virtue and innocence of Hippolitus, that although the whole sex should, like Phedra, die, and fill mount Ida with letters like those she left behind her, I never could be persuaded, that such a son was guilty.

CHORUS.

Alas, alas, this new misfortune completes our woes! Oh destiny inevitable!

THESEUS.

Yes, I will own it; my hatred for the traitor, who has dishonoured me, has made me listen to this recital with a kind of joy. But ah, I feel, spite of his guilt, I feel a father's tenderness revive. Thus balanced, I am neither grieved nor rejoiced at this event, and bear it with indifference.

OFFICER.

With indifference! Alas, what more must this unhappy prince endure to satisfy thy rage? Oh Theseus, cease at length to hate a son already too unfortunate!

THESEUS.

Let him be brought hither: I would see him once more, to reproach him with his crime, and complete his conviction by his punishment itself.

[The officer goes out.]

SCENE

SCENE the THIRD.

THESEUS, the CHORUS.

CHORUS.

It is thou, Venus, and thy cruel son that render men and Gods relentless. Swift flies the winged Deity o'er land and sea, and all is waste before him. The haughty tyrant takes a malicious pleasure in subduing hearts, whether of the simple inmates of the forests, or the inhabitants of air, of all that draw the vital breath of life, but chiefly of the human race. Such is the vast, the mighty empire over which Venus and her son extend their sovereign sway.

SCENE the FOURTH.

To them DIANA.

DIANA.

Son of Egeus, behold Diana, who condescends to speak to thee. Oh wretched Theseus! thy son unjustly dies: Phedra by her ambiguous letter has deceived thee, and thou art miserable. Oh thou inexorable father, call on the shades of hell to hide thy shame, or wish to be transformed to a bird, that thou may'st fly far from this land, which cries for vengeance on thee! The good, the just, and merciful, will no more hold commerce with thee. Hear me; I will unfold the fatal mystery. Alas, it will indeed have no other consequence, but to fill thee with a vain regret; yet this, even this will be some satisfaction to me. Know, then, thy son is innocent; he carries with him to the tomb an uncorrupted virtue. Know too, that Phedra loved, to madness loved the chaste, the hapless youth. Yes, Theseus, thy queen was the victim of a Goddess, who ever was an enemy to Diana, and to all whose hearts are pure. Phedra burnt with an impious flame, but armed her reason against her love. Her confidant, without her knowledge, acted all the rest. Possessed of Phedra's secret, she discovered to Hippolitus her execrable passion, having first bound him by an oath to secrecy. The prince trembled with horror; yet such was his piety, such his regard to the sanctity of his oath, artfully extorted from him, that when the sentence of his death was pronounced

nounced by thee, he kept the fatal secret in his bosom, though inevitable ruin was the consequence. As for thy wife, her fears of being discovered dictated that horrid stratagem to her, by which thy son is murdered, and thyself made miserable for ever.

THESEUS.

Oh Heaven !

DIANA.

Do my reproaches move thee, thou cruel father ? Listen to me : still then, and die with shame and grief. Thy father Neptune promised to accomplish three of thy wishes. Ah wretch, that curse which should have had thy fiercest enemy for its object fell on thy innocent son. Not for this horrid purpose did the too indulgent Deity lavish these favours on thee : and the thanks thou payest, are to offend thy benefactor, and Diana. Thou who hast despised our oracles, and instead of leaving it to time to discover whether thy suspicions were just or not, thou with wild rage hast hastened thy revenge, and by thy horrible imprecations hast murdered thy guiltless son.

THESEUS.

Oh Goddess, give me instant death.

DIANA.

Thy crime deserves no pardon ; yet thou may'st still obtain it. For, alas, it must be acknowledged, that by the wrath of Venus these miseries were occasioned : and such is the law established among us, that no Deity opposes the designs of another. For know, had I not been restrained by that reverence I owe to the father of the Gods, I would not have suffered the most beloved of my adorers to perish with impunity : therefore, Theseus, thy ignorance lessens thy guilt. Thou wert deceived by Phedra's letter, Phedra, who died to make the ruin of Hippolitus sure ; on thee, unhappy father, falls this weight of woe : --- yet is my grief no less. The Gods, though they pour swift vengeance on the wicked and their posterity, yet take no pleasure in the misfortunes of the just.

CHORUS.

Alas, behold the unhappy prince ! where are now his beauties, the graces of his sprightly youth ! His shining hair is matted with blood ; his limbs are all deformed with wounds. Oh wretched house ! oh double calamity ! By these fatal strokes, I acknowledge the divine hand that has inflicted them.

SCENE

SCENE the FIFTH.

To them HIPPOLITUS, his TRAIN.

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh torture insupportable! mangled with wounds I die, and by a father's order---it is done---it is past---Ah! what racking pains pierce through my head! convulsions tear me! Bear me no further, friends. Oh, let me rest a moment, [*they lay him on a bed.*] Alas, my chariot, my coursers which I bred myself, and fed with my own hand---See the reward of all my cares---They have murdered me. Ah, I conjure you, (*to his attendants*) in the name of the Gods, touch not my wounds; do not increase my torture by your cruel succour. Raise me gently, and bear me from the presence of a father, whose fatal error has undone me. Oh Jupiter, this Hippolitus, distinguished for his piety, his untainted innocence, sees himself reserved for a most cruel death---Ah, what availed it to him that he was virtuous? My pains increase; touch me not, my friends---I will have no assistance but from death---Oh you torture me with your barbarous help---which of you will give me a sword? Oh that I could cut the thread of my miserable days! Fatal imprecation! fatal crimes committed by my fathers, who have dipped their hands in blood! The punishments that were due to them, fall all united on a wretch: but why, why upon the innocent? Oh Gods, what shall I do? how shall I deliver myself from torments, which make their violence be felt even by my mind? Oh night eternal, the peaceful slumber of the dead fall on me, and put a period to my pains!

DIANA.

Unhappy Hippolitus! in what a condition do I behold thee! Thy virtues, thy generosity, have undone thee.

HIPPOLITUS.

What celestial odour diffuses itself around? My heart, dying as I am, is sensible to joy; and even my mangled body is relieved by it. Is it not the divine Diana, whose voice I hear?

DIANA.

It is that Goddess whom thou hast always loved, unhappy prince.

HIP-

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh my sovereign! thou seest my misery.

DIANA.

Ah, too plain I see it! wretched in my immortality, I cannot shed tears over thy sad fate.

HIPPOLITUS.

The minister, the companion of thy soft amusements, is no more.

DIANA.

Alas, thou diest, Hippolitus!

HIPPOLITUS.

No more shalt thou behold him taming the furious steed, nor with fresh wreaths adorning thy altars, chaste Diana.

DIANA.

Oh sad effect of the relentless rage of Venus!

HIPPOLITUS.

Alas! by what wounds do I at length know the cruel Goddess who has murdered me!

DIANA.

She thought herself despised by thee. The purity of thy heart has offended the haughty power.

HIPPOLITUS.

It is Venus, then, who has sacrificed three victims in one day.

DIANA.

She has spared neither thy father, Phedra, nor thyself.

HIPPOLITUS.

Must I then weep the misfortune of a father too?

DIANA.

He has been deceived by Venus.

HIPPOLITUS.

Oh, my unhappy father!

THESEUS.

I die, my son: life is unsupportable to me.

HIPPOLITUS.

HIPPOLITUS.

I am more grieved for thy unhappy error than my own death.

THESEUS.

Why did I not suffer that fate my imprecations have called down on thee?

HIPPOLITUS.

Ah, it was a fatal grant thy father Neptune made thee.

THESEUS.

Oh madness! it was I who implored it.

HIPPOLITUS.

Alas, thy rage transported thee: my punishment could not be avoided.

THESEUS.

I had lost my reason: the Gods had deprived me of it.

HIPPOLITUS.

It is not fit that mortals should utter imprecations against the Gods.

DIANA.

Hippolitus, thy piety costs thee thy life; but unrevenge thou shalt not die: nor shall the cruelty of Venus remain unpunished. This hand shall pierce her favourite's heart*; and I have decreed, that your unfortunate virtue shall be rewarded. Træzen shall lavish honours on thee; her virgins †, long ere they approach the altars of the God of marriage, shall offer at thy tomb their shining hair, and pay the tribute of their tears. Thou shalt be the lasting subject of their songs; and Phædra's passion, to which thouallest a victim, shall never be forgot in future ages.---Theseus, embrace thy dying son: spite of thyself, thou hast condemned him: for when the Gods permit the crime, how is it possible to avoid being guilty ‡? Hippolitus, forgive thy father: it is I who command

* Adonis, who was beloved by Venus. He was the son of Cyniras king of Cyprus, who had an incestuous commerce with his daughter Myrrha.

† This alludes to the customs and ceremonies of ancient Greece. As we go on, we shall find many more. It was these allusions which rendered the ancient tragedies more interesting to the spectators, who saw with

pleasure the origin of their festivals, their ceremonies, and customs; but these strokes have no longer any thing interesting to us.

‡ This maxim is conformable to the opinion of the ancients concerning destiny, and proves, that their morality, in some respects so perfect, was not always as pure as father Thomassin pretends.

thee, to forgive and love him. Adieu, unhappy youth : * I am not permitted to pollute my eyes with the sight of death, or to be witness of the last sighs of the dying. The fatal moment approaches fast. Adieu.

HIPPOLITUS.

Farewel, chaste Goddess ; be ever happy, and cease to lament my death. I forget, since thou dost command me to do so, that I die unjustly condemned by a father : I have ever paid too great a deference to thy will to disobey thee in this article.

SCENE the SIXTH.

THESEUS, HIPPOLITUS, the CHORUS,

HIPPOLITUS.

The shades of death already fall upon my eyes. Receive me, oh my father, in thy arms : support thy dying son.

THESEUS.

My son, my dear Hippolitus, what dost thou resolve on for thy miserable father ?

HIPPOLITUS.

I expire : already I behold the gates of Pluto's gloomy kingdom open to receive me.

THESEUS.

† Wilt thou, expiring, leave me a heart polluted with a crime ?

HIPPOLITUS.

No ; I absolve thee for my death.

THESEUS.

Art thou then so generous ? Wilt thou free me from a guilt so horrible ?

HIPPOLITUS.

I swear by great Diana.

* This ancient superstition has been observed more than once. The living thought themselves polluted by coming near the dead ; and the former were even veiled, that they might not behold them expire.

† The Pagans of antiquity believed they

were exposed to the wrath of Nemesis, the Goddess of vengeance, if the innocent person whom they had oppressed did not absolve them from the crime and the punishment due to it, by pardoning them.

THESEUS.

Oh too generous son of a too guilty father!

HIPPOLITUS.

Adieu, my dearest father, for the last time, adieu.

THESEUS.

Oh virtue! oh tenderness unequalled!

HIPPOLITUS.

May the Gods give thee another son, who may resemble me.

THESEUS.

Abandon me not, my son. Oh live, my dear Hippolitus!

HIPPOLITUS.

My small remains of life and strength leave me this moment---
I expire---Oh my father---cover my head *.

THESEUS.

Oh Athens, oh Trœzen, what a prince hast thou this moment
lost! Oh greatly wretched father!---Cruel Venus, the memory of
thy vengeance will live for ever in my heart!

CHORUS.

Long, long will our tears flow for thee, Hippolitus! What heart
so obdurate, but must mourn the unhappy fate of virtue such as
thine.

* According to the custom we have already mentioned.

OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

HIPPOLITUS of EURIPIDES,

AND THE

PHEDRA of RACINE.

MONSIEUR Racine has in his Phedra followed a plan very different from that of Euripides. For, first, to introduce his episode or subordinate action, which we are so fond of in our plays, as if it was not possible for a play to be perfect without it, this great poet has almost entirely altered the character of Hippolitus. Instead of painting him as he really was, a philosopher, and insensible to the passion of love, he describes him amorous, passionate, and in love with Aricia, the daughter of that Pallas whom Theseus had, for political reasons, put to death. This circumstance indeed is so far useful, as it gives new force to Phedra's passion, who, in discovering that she has a rival, expresses all the emotions of jealousy.

Secondly, he makes Phedra's confidant propose to her mistress to accuse Hippolitus of a design to ravish her; a stratagem too base to be formed by a princess, according to our manners;

“ Moi, dit-elle, que j'ose opprimer & noircir l'innocence !”

Yet it amounts to the same thing, since his Phedra permits this horrible accusation, and confirms Theseus in his belief of the wickedness of his son.

“ Fais ce que tu voudras, je m'abandonne à toi ;

“ Dans le trouble où je suis, je ne puis rien pour moi.”

And this upon the principle laid down by her confidant Oenone.

“ Le sang innocent dût-il être versé ;

“ Que ne demande point notre honneur menacé ?

“ C'est

“ C'est un thréfor trop cher pour ofer le commettre :
 “ Quelque loi qu'il vous dicte, il faut vous y soumettre,
 “ Madame, & pour sauver notre honneur combattu,
 “ Il faut immoler tout, & même la vertu.”

Upon the whole, Euripides makes Phedra act less like a princess than a woman, and Racine saves appearances in the former, without lessening the faults of the latter.

Yet he confesses that he has copied from Euripides those striking beauties which adorn this finest of all his plays. This truth we may ourselves discover, by comparing the two tragedies : and we shall also find, that he has not carried his imitations so far as he might have done, especially with regard to the beautiful disorder of Phedra, who durst not reveal her fatal secret, and yet wished to have it known. The plan he has adopted obliged him to neglect likewise many other beauties which the Greek poet has introduced with so much art. Of this number is the grief of Theseus for Phedra's death, and the scene where Hippolitus dies.

I am sensible that so exact a picture of nature as that of a dead princess, and a prince disfigured with wounds, presented to the view of the audience, would not be agreeable to our taste. Therefore Racine is not to be blamed, for suppressing whatever is not conformable to our ideas : but I must again repeat, that, if we would do justice to the ancients, we must, in imagination, transport ourselves to the Athenian theatre, and forget the manners of Paris.

There is one thing very singular, and worth observing, in these two tragedies of Euripides and Racine. Both of them turn upon a very indelicate circumstance, which by some judicious persons have been thought defective, and even of dangerous consequence to manners : but, it may be alledged on the other side, that this nice and difficult point, this fault, if it must be called one, makes the soul of both pieces, and produces so much of that interesting concern, and that majestic sorrow so necessary to tragedy, that it deserves to be pardoned. Although I have endeavoured to explain the reason of it, in treating of Oedipus, against which the objection is equally strong ; yet I have thought it necessary to give a fuller answer in my remarks upon the tragedy of Phedra and Hippolitus, to justify the applauses of Greece and France. This then is the question : how can a person, fired without his own consent by love not only involuntary, but kindled by the immediate anger of the Gods,

Gods, be coolly exhibited to reasonable men, and yet more to christians? Does not this appear at once an injury to the Divinity, which is represented as producing a crime, and to human nature, which is thus made criminal by force?

To this Racine, instead of making a direct answer, contents himself with observing, that it is in this circumstance the whole beauty of his subject consists, and its conformity to the rules laid down by Aristotle.

"This subject, says he, has all those qualities which Aristotle requires in the hero of a tragedy, and which are fitted to excite terror and compassion. Phedra is neither wholly guilty, nor wholly innocent: she is, by the anger of the Gods, and the force of her destiny, entangled in a lawless passion, all the horror of which she feels. She struggles against it; she chuses to die rather than reveal it, and when she is obliged to explain herself, her confusion and remorse shew plainly, that her crime is rather a punishment from heaven than a voluntary motion of her will."

Racine, by this very defence, shews that the difficulty still subsists; for, after all, how does this punishment agree with the justice of the Gods, who inflict it, or with the virtue of the person who is the innocent victim of it? We may say with Stiblinus, that all this, even among the ancients themselves, was considered as an allegorical fable, which teaches, that idleness and luxury, represented under the person of Venus, are the causes of the shameful errors mankind fall into. But, after all, the allegory is still faulty in itself, by the want of probability. The spectators stop at this veil, as the readers of Esop's fables stop at the image as well as at the truth which is concealed under it.

It ought, however, to be acknowledged, that in the fabulous system of the ancients many indecencies were admitted in their Gods to favour their own inclinations; and that they made a monstrous agreement between a kind of incomprehensible fatality and the use of reason. So that according to this complicated idea, Phedra might to them appear guilty, and unfortunate at the same time: unfortunate, by becoming the victim of Venus, and guilty of yielding to, or at least of confessing a passion, which she ought only to have endeavoured to subdue, since the Divinity, who forced her to love, forced her not, whatever Racine may say, to yield to that love, nor to dishonour herself by a confession which increased her guilt.

Now

Now, in fabulous subjects, such as that wherein the Gods play their parts, (as in the fables of Esop, where the beasts speak and act like reasonable creatures,) the reader, without examining whether the ancients thought justly or not, enters naturally into the whole system of the fable, which he supposes to be established. However faulty, however ridiculous, it must appear to him, he admits it more readily than strange manners and customs. This is reasonable, because the fable is better known than manners. Would any one find fault with the painter who should represent Hippolitus dragged along the ground, in the sight of the monster who had frightened his horses? No; this monster would not offend the eye; and, in painting, fable is as indifferent as in history. Even history itself, if it is not well known, finds less credit than fable. For we should be shocked, if a painter represented Hippolitus surrounded by the philosophers of his time, rather than among a crowd of huntsmen; because this young prince is better known in the character of a huntsman, than in that of a philosopher.

Upon this principle therefore, which I think absolutely true, the wonderful impression which both Phedra and Oedipus made upon the mind in every age may be easily accounted for: nor does it appear that the subjects of these two tragedies can have any bad consequences, with regard to morals and virtue, since Oedipus and Phedra are punished as well for their real errors as their involuntary crimes. Besides, the spectator, who accommodates himself to the fable, for the sake of the representation, is not so stupid as to make it the rule of his conduct. The censurers of Phedra and Oedipus must have done themselves some violence, by objecting to a system being adopted in these tragedies which, false as it is, antiquity has received, and from whence results so many striking beauties.

We well know, that if these two persons were christians, they ought to speak and act otherwise: but this is not the question. It is natural that we should chuse to see them such as they were; and it is by entering into deep reflexions, and endeavouring to reconcile the ancient manners with our own, that we find no pleasure in seeing them thus represented; and to this is owing the disgust we entertain against the tragedies of the Greeks, which we often condemn with as little reason as they, if they were to return again to the world, would ours upon the same foundation. This, then, if I am not mistaken, is the solution of the proposed difficulty; a solution so simple and plain, that I have endeavoured to establish it; namely,

namely, that to judge properly of all compositions of this kind, whether ancient or modern, we must view nature such as the writers have described it; that is to say, with the appendages of the notions and manners of their age, good or bad, it matters not.

In Euripides we also find an error, independent of the manners, which Racine has taken care to avoid; and this is, that we are not informed of the fate of Phedra's confidant, after she had been disgracefully driven from the presence of her sovereign. It is probable that she either killed herself, or went into banishment; but the poet says nothing of it, nor does it enter into the mind of Theseus, although extremely anxious to know for what cause his wife had murdered herself, to ask this confidant any questions, or even to enquire what was become of her. He contents himself with a vague enquiry; and upon the melancholy silence of the attendants assembled about him, he only says, "What, will none answer? have I then in vain placed so many persons about her, devoted to my service?" He then renews his lamentations, without thinking of the confidant, from whom it was likely he might learn more than from any other person. This indeed seems to be a fault, unless we will allow, that it may be easily perceived this woman, struck as by a thunderbolt with her sudden disgrace, had in her despair killed herself, especially after these terrible words of Phedra, "Be silent; too long have I listened to thy perfidious counsels; I am the victim of them: never more appear before me; think of thy own destiny, I will take care of mine." And this consequence of her despair may be the more naturally supposed, as we find, that upon such a farewell, Racine makes Oenone throw herself into the sea.

"Je ne t'écoute plus, va-t-en monstre exécration,

"Va, laisse-moi le soin de mon sort déplorable.

"Puisse le juste Ciel dignement te payer, &c."

Yet we must confess, that one word in the tragedy of Euripides would not have been amiss to remove this objection, which seems not to be without foundation.

We have as little reason to be satisfied with the prologue of Venus, which anticipates the greatest part of the principal events. Euripides is always guilty of this fault, which is so carefully avoided by Sophocles.

And besides this, there is something exceptionable in the Chorus, who, by promising Phedra secrecy, in such a case become criminal themselves, in a certain degree, and who suffer Hippolitus to be

punished, without revealing the truth. It is true, indeed, that this Chorus is composed of women faithful to the queen's interests, and engaged to silence by the sanctity of an oath. However, this circumstance can no otherwise be excused, but upon the extreme delicacy of the Greeks with regard to oaths, tho' rash and imprudent. Hippolitus is a proof of it, who rather chose to die than violate one which was artfully extorted from him. Euripides himself, too severely felt the delicacy of his audience upon the subject of this tragedy, when, as Aristotle * relates, and Cicero after † him, they would have made a very serious affair of this verse pronounced by Hippolitus,

“ Ma langue a prononcé le serment : mais mon cœur l'a désavoué.
Act III. Sc. II.

However, it is the same Hippolitus who dies, because he will not violate this oath. We must not imagine, that the Greeks in practice were religious observers of their word. It is well known, that Grecian faith hath passed into a proverb ; but their morality was severe, if their manners was not so. Mankind is always the same in all times, and in all places.

There is another seeming, or perhaps real fault, in the Chorus, or rather in Phedra, with respect to the Chorus. This princess shews the greatest reluctance imaginable to own her passion to her confidant, who had nursed her ; yet she confides this delicate secret to a great number of women, with whom she must certainly be much less familiar than with her, and when a moment before she had been overwhelmed with confusion, for having suffered some obscure and doubtful marks of her passion to escape her. Conquered by the importunity of her nurse, and upon the point, as Racine expresses it, of declaring *the shocking truth*, ought she not to have got rid of witnesses troublesome, and perhaps censorious and indiscreet (for they were women, and she had no reason to expect the more favour on that account :) witnesses who might do her more harm than good, and who were at least wholly useless with regard to her designs ?

To this it may be answered, that those who study the human heart will not be surprised to find a person who labours under the violence of a passion which knows no bounds, committing an imprudent action, without reflecting on the consequences of it.

* Arist. Reth. L. 3. C. 15.

† Cicero de off. L. 3. § 29.

Phedra, who had so long struggled with herself, might very naturally yield to the unsuspected curiosity of the women of her court, as well as to the repeated intreaties of her confidant : her secret rather escaped from her than was voluntarily disclosed ; and, lastly, the confusion and disorder of her mind might hinder her from perceiving that she ruined herself by this confession, though made to persons whose duty obliged them to be secret ; yet more, she had, as she says expressly herself, exhausted every means of subduing this passion : her long resistance, she says, and her obstinate silence were unsuccessful. She saw no other way to preserve her honour and her virtue, than that death to which she had already condemned herself. It became necessary for her to justify this design against her own life, of which the Chorus, through tenderness for her, required an account. The resolution she had taken to die appeared to her so glorious, that she was easily persuaded to confess the motive of it, and at this price to declare an involuntary passion which she determined to punish by a voluntary death. Her secret disclosed under such circumstances, rendered her more estimable in the eyes of those who heard it, as her confidant foretold it would. Lastly, by declaring it, she laid herself under the necessity of dying, and of dying virtuous : reasons rather specious than convincing, I confess ; but they are such, which a passion long combated adopts so much the more readily, as it seeks to deceive virtue ; and even virtue itself grows tired of being the only witness of its own sufferings.

If these excuses, although furnished by the subject Euripides has chosen, appear unsatisfactory to the censurers of the ancient theatre, yet they cannot but confess, at least, that the poet has by them very artfully lessened the fault, which is almost inseparable from Chorusses, whose continual presence on the stage affords indeed a very beautiful spectacle, but sometimes extremely troublesome to the principal actors. It is very clear that Euripides was desirous of remedying this defect, at the same time that he preserved the Chorus ; for if they had been ignorant of Phedra's passion, they would have remained mute, and wholly inactive : they would have been useless, and have deprived the scene of one of its principal ornaments.

Some other objections may still be made, and (if you will) some other errors may be found ; but besides, that they are very inconsiderable, the extravagant admirers of the ancients will not allow that they subsist at all, and those who too partially favour the mo-

derns will be sure to observe every thing that is liable to criticism. I only intreat both parties to read again the Phædra of Racine : if it gains upon their opinion, I may venture to say, that it will not be entirely to the prejudice of its model, since the inventor always enjoys great part of the reputation which he acquires who afterwards excels him.

Seneca having likewise treated this subject in Latin, the reader perhaps will not be displeased to have a slight view of the conduct he has pursued ; and he will doubtless observe, that Racine has, without owning it in his preface, (which I am really surpris'd at) copied many beautiful strokes from this poet, which he knew how to make still more beautiful ; and, among others, a whole speech, which he contents himself with translating. As for the rest, he left it to any one who chose to make use of it, and in this he was certainly right.

OBSER-

OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

HIPPOLITUS of SENECA.

THE first act of Seneca's tragedy contains three scenes. Hippolitus, followed by a great number of huntsmen, opens the first scene, and plays the part of a huntsman in chief: for he distributes his troops, like the general of an army, by assigning them their several parts, in a geographical manner, after which he goes to take possession of his own. To him Phedra succeeds with her confidant. This queen, quite different from the Phedra of Euripides, begins by shewing all the wildness of her passion for Hippolitus. With Euripides and Racine, Phedra is in continual perplexity and confusion, occasioned by the conflict she feels in her bosom between her duty and her involuntary love, while her confidant, who sees her languishing under some unknown disease, uses her utmost endeavours to discover the secret, which the queen at length suffers to escape her. Seneca makes her give way to all the violence of her passion: she will follow Hippolitus over land and sea, though despised and rejected, though her father and her husband should know, and punish her for her criminal desires. The confidant is a true duenna; a prude by constraint rather than virtue. She endeavours to recal her mistress to a sense of her duty by very solid arguments. The obstinate Phedra will trample under foot modesty, virtue, and fear itself; yet sometimes she yields, and at length recovers to reason; but upon what? upon the prudent counsels of her confidant? No such matter; but at a bare intreaty of hers, and this, without leaving the smallest interval between these extravagant sallies of her passion and this sudden return of reason: and now she resolves to die. The confidant, terrified at this resolution, adopts in the same moment the former sentiments of the queen, and so heartily that she promises to move Hippolitus, on condition that Phedra will live. This plan is very different, we see, from that followed by Racine, and Euripides especially. The former makes Phedra always preserve her modesty, in the midst of her greatest extravagancies, and is continually bringing her back to virtue. In the latter, the confidant

fidant, unknown to her mistress, and contrary to her express commands, acquaints Hippolitus with the passion he had inspired.

The Chorus in Seneca, after all this fine conversation to which they had been witnesses, amuse themselves with singing some very fine verses upon the power of love; and in the second act, when the old confidant returns, they ask her very calmly, how all had passed, without interesting themselves any otherwise in the whole action. The confidant tells them, that Phedra is greatly indisposed. The doors of the palace are thrown open, and Phedra appears at her toilet, dressing in the habit of an Amazon. Her attendant, after invoking Diana, perceives Hippolitus, and takes courage to make him an harangue, almost in the same terms with that of Linco in the Pastor Fido.

* “ Deh, lascia hormai le felve,
“ Folle Garzon, lascia le fere, ed ama.”

† *Urbem frequenta, civium cœtus cole.*

Leave, ah leave the forests, and taste those pleasures which are to be found in cities.

The philosophic prince, who does not yet discover what is the old woman's aim, puts her off with a fine moral speech, in which he expatiates upon the innocent amusements of the country, so greatly preferable to the tumult of cities, and concludes with a violent invective against women, which gives the confidant an opportunity of defending her sex, and the prince of renewing his satire. At length Phedra enters, and makes Hippolitus a declaration of her passion. This speech is certainly very finely imagined, and is to be found in Racine; and indeed the French poet has not failed to imitate, with great exactness, the whole conduct of this scene, and to translate part of it, particularly from these lines:

“ On ne voit point deux fois le rivage des morts,
“ Seigneur.”

*Regni tenacis Dominus & tacitæ Stygis,
Nullam reliquos fecit ad superos viam, &c.*

To this,

Magnæ regnator Deum, &c.

“ Dieux qu'est que j'entends? Madame, oubliez-vous
“ Que Thésée est mon pere, & qu'il est votre époux?”

* Il Pastor Fido Atto I. Sc. 1.

† Seneca's Hippolitus, Act III.

Without reckoning on the offer which the queen makes Hippolitus of her crown and dominions ; an inimitable stroke, which has furnished the poet with a whole scene, namely, the first of the third act, where Phedra says,

- “ Va trouver de ma part ce jeune ambitieux,
 “ Oenone : fais briller la couronne à ses yeux,
 “ Qu’il mette sur son front le sacré diadème :
 “ Je ne veux que l’honneur de l’attacher moi-même, &c.”

But to return to Seneca. Hippolitus, flying from Phedra, leaves his sword in her hands, with which she attempts to kill herself. This circumstance of the sword is contrary to the manners of the Greeks, who never wore any weapon but in war, or upon a journey. The confidant, however, takes occasion from it to persuade Phedra to free herself from the consequences of this affair, by first accusing the prince. The Chorus close this act, with cold praises of the beauty and virtue of Hippolitus.

In the third act Theseus arrives, and congratulates himself on his having escaped from hell. Racine has made good use of this fabulous journey of Theseus to Pluto’s kingdom. Phedra’s confidant runs in great terror to acquaint the king, that his wife is determined to kill herself. “ How ! (says Theseus), her husband is returned, and does she resolve to die ? ” “ It is thy return which hastens her death,” replies the confidant ; a very strange answer, as we shall see. The palace-gates are instantly opened, and the queen appears with a sword in her hand, in the attitude of a woman wild with despair. She asks of her husband permission to die : he refuses to grant it ; she persists in concealing the cause of her despair. But Theseus declares he will extort the secret from her attendant by tortures. This threat determines Phedra to speak, and she uses those very words which Racine equally attributes to Euripides and to Seneca, although they are only to be found in the latter, *vim corpus tulit*. The conduct Euripides observes is very different, and that of Racine is still better, as he has shewn a nice regard to our manners. Racine spares Theseus the shame of knowing himself dishonoured ; and Euripides, by means of a letter, the terms of which are not well known, continues to save in part the honour of this hero : but Seneca makes him blush in the view of the audience, by an imposture, which may pass for a plain confession, and which was certainly as little in the taste of the Romans as in ours. I remember that the romance called the princess of Cleves

Cleves was severely censured formerly, on account of a very different confession made by this lady to her husband, which was, that she had a passion for another, rather to prevent than to suppress.

Theseus, in great astonishment, as may be well imagined, desires to know who it is that has offered her this injury. Phedra shews him the fatal sword, which he knows but too well: she then leaves him to vent his boiling rage in imprecations, which might be thought beautiful, if they had not so much of the orator in them, and if they were better placed, as in the Greek and French tragedies. The Chorus, as usual, finish the act, but it is with a violent invective against the Gods, whom they accuse of suffering vice to triumph, and virtue to be oppressed.

The fourth act begins with some melancholly tidings, the bearer of which complains of his ill-fate, in being obliged to relate them. Theseus answers him by these beautiful lines,

“ Ne metue clades fortiter fari asperas ;
“ Non imparatum pectus ærumnis gero.”

“ Speak, (says he) be not afraid to tell me of the most shocking afflictions: my heart is not now to be prepared for sufferings.” The sentences with which this piece is thick sown, are almost all in this manner, as the following, for example,

“ Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.

“ Moderate griefs are eloquent; but overwhelming woe is only to be expressed by silence.” It is Phedra who speaks thus to Hippolitus, in that beautiful scene where she makes him a confession of her love. And I have forgot to observe on the subject of this interview, that the beginning of it appears more interesting than the same scene of the French poets, beautiful as that also is. Phedra perceiving Hippolitus, only says,

“ Le voici. Vers mon cœur tout mon sang se retire ;
“ J'oublie en le voyant ce que je viens lui dire.”

Oenone encourages her to speak, by reminding her of her children's interest; so that the queen takes advantage of this opportunity to excuse her former ill treatment of this prince, and to implore his favour towards those who are so dear to her. She acknowledges that Hippolitus had great reason to complain of her, and adds,

“ Si

" Si pourtant à l'offense on mesure la peine,
 " Si la haine peut seule attirer votre haine,
 " Jamais femme ne fut plus digne de pitié
 " Et moins digne, Seigneur, de votre inimitié."

All this is natural, and finely imagined; but I am not sure whether the beginning of the same scene in the Latin poet does not better prepare us for the confession of so strange a passion as Phedra's. At least, it throws more concernment into this interview: for Phedra, overwhelmed with confusion upon the first appearance of Hippolitus, faints away in his arms. When she recovers, she is ashamed to behold the light again; then her passion resuming its power over her, she ventures to speak: yet still she knows not how to begin. She expresses herself in a perplexed, ambiguous manner. Hippolitus calls her mother; she rejects that title: a title odious, she says, and no longer suitable to her situation. She is ambitious of the name of sister only, or rather that of slave to the prince. She resigns her crown into his hands: she implores him to have some compassion on the widow of Theseus: and here it is that the French and Latin poets unite, as by agreement, to produce that noble contrast between an artful princess passionately in love, and a young virtuous prince justly astonished at what he had so lately heard, and continuing under the influence of that astonishment. The invention and art of this scene are entirely due to Seneca, since there is not the least trace of it in Euripides; but the latter seems to have pursued a conduct more natural, and certainly more honourable for Phedra, when he gives her sentiments so virtuous, that she fears nothing so much as to have her passion discovered to him who is the object of it. Her confidant is obliged to sound her upon this subject: she finds her inflexible, and thinks herself under a necessity of deceiving her by an imaginary philtre, that she might get an opportunity of conversing with Hippolitus, and of soliciting him in favour of the queen's passion. It is not thus with Seneca and Racine. These poets make Phedra admit more readily the poisonous counsels of Oenone. With them, it is not the confidant who betrays the secret of her passion; it is Phedra herself, who declares it to Hippolitus. Indeed, they both palliate this step in Phedra, by the report that is spread of Theseus's death, a circumstance which is not supposed by Euripides: but yet this report is sudden and confused, and Phedra's declaration precipitate and without disguise; besides, in Racine, she complains of having discovered that she has a rival, and this at the very time of her

husband's return. I do not design by this to condemn those passages, which it is impossible to help admiring: my observations tend only to bring the reader to the point I have always in view, which is, to be sensible of the difference between the manners, and consequently between the taste of Athens and of Paris. In Athens, the wild sallies of Phedra's passion, palliated as they are, and full of beauties, would not be endured; and I am very much afraid, that the French, who, without any regard to the difference of manners, are for bringing back every thing to the ideas of our own age, will now, by way of reprisal, condemn the extreme reserve of Phedra, and the haughtiness of Hippolitus, who is certainly much less gallant than the Hippolitus of Racine.

Seneca's narration of the death of that young prince is partly copied from Euripides, and partly the result of his own imagination; particularly in the description he gives of Hippolitus mangled and torn to pieces. But, upon the whole, it is magnificent; that of Euripides is only adorned: Racine, who was desirous of improving upon both, is perhaps a little too pompous in his description, at least many persons have thought so; and that these ornaments are rather too studiously sought for, by a man so full of grief for this unhappy event as the governor of Hippolitus is supposed to be. It is certain, however, that the same thing cannot be said of this description, as was said of an excellent painter, who having painted Helen loaded her with jewels to heighten her beauty, "Thou hast made her richer than she is beautiful." For this recital, joined to what preceded it, is so affecting, that the poetic ornaments with which it is decked, cannot stifle that tender sorrow which it infuses into every heart. But, in my opinion, the recital of Euripides, although full of sublime images, has something more natural and more interesting in it, especially if we add to it the tender farewell Hippolitus takes of his country, and his words when he is upon the point of leaving it. And it is this which persuades me, that if the French actor drew so many tears when he recited the speech of Theramenes, that the spectators, often inattentive to the rest of the piece, several times repeated, "See the good Guerin weeps;" the Athenian Theramenes had not less success with the Grecians. In a word, we may see, by the care Racine has taken to embellish this recital, that he was willing to supply that beautiful scene in Euripides, who introduces Hippolitus mangled as he is: a spectacle which would not be endured upon our stage, but by weakening it at the expence of truth. It must be acknowledged, how-

however, that Racine has improved upon his model in two points, which shew great penetration and delicacy. For first, the Greek poet does not make Hippolitus encounter the monster; he does not even afford him time to recollect himself: the Latin poet gives him an air of intrepidity, and puts him, (if the expression may be allowed) in a fighting attitude; but in the French poet, he throws his javelin at the monster, with so sure an aim, that he wounds him. Thus we see the progress of human genius; it always approaches nearer to perfection. Racine will not allow Theseus, when he hears the account of his son's death, to be either wholly indifferent, as Euripides makes him, or afflicted, while he still believes him guilty, as Seneca supposes him; but has, with great art and judgment, chosen a middle way, and so regulated circumstances, that Theseus has already conceived some suspicions against Phedra, when he says to Theramenes, "What hast thou done with my son? where is my son?" This disposition of mind, which produces these lines,

"O mon fils, cher espoir que je me fais ravi!

"Inexorables Dieux, qui m'avez trop servi!

"A quels mortels regrets ma vie est réservée, &c."

will always appear to us more consistent with human nature than the indifference expressed by a prince who cannot be a father, and the revenger of a crime, but by halves: although this last situation is often more just, when this father is offended. But it sometimes happens, that the justest sentiments give disgust upon the stage, where we rather would have men represented such as they should be, than such as they really are. On the other side, Racine has fallen into a little error, which Euripides has avoided; for, in shewing the courage of the prince, who wounds the monster, he makes his attendants cowards, who take refuge in a neighbouring temple, and this upon the credit of Seneca, who speaks only of some shepherds dispersed in the plain.

"Tout fuit, & sans s'armer d'un courage inutile

"Dans le temple voisin chacun cherche un asyle.

"Hippolyte lui seul, &c."

I must likewise add, that in these verses,

"A ces mots le héros *expire*."

The word *expire* is not French any more than many others which may with justice be objected to in his recitals.

But to finish our account of Seneca's tragedy. After the Chorus have closed the fourth act with some verses which appear trifling, the fifth shews us Phedra delivered up to her remorse, in the presence of her husband. She fancies she sees the shade of Hippolitus: she says some pathetic things to it; at length she accuses herself, and stabs herself with a poinard, which she afterwards presents to Theseus.

" Quid facere rapto debeas nato parens

" Disce ex noverca : condere Acherontis plagis."

" Thêus, (says she) learn from a step-mother the duty of a father towards a son whom he has murdered: die!"

This invitation resembles, though in a different sense, that of Arria to Petus. The Roman lady wounds herself mortally; then offers the bloody sword to her husband, who was condemned to die, and conjures him to prevent the execution of the sentence by a voluntary death. " Take it, my dear Petus, (says she) it is not painful." A truly Roman sentiment; upon which Martial has refined, to substitute wit to tenderness, and antithesis to heroism.

* " Vulnus quod feci, non dolet, inquit :

" Sed quod tu facies, hoc mihi, Pæte, dolet."

" Petus, the wound I have given myself is not painful : I feel pain only from that which thou must receive."

In Seneca, when Theseus is undeceived, he becomes almost as frantic as Orestes, and here and there pronounces very fine lines; as these, for example :

" Sidera, & manes, & undas scelere complevi meo :

" Amplius fors nulla restat : regna me norunt tria."

" I have filled heaven, hell, and the sea, with my crimes. No asylum is left me now : too well am I known in the three kingdoms of the Gods."

Racine has profited like an able master of this thought, but puts it not into the mouth of Theseus but Phedra. It is in the sixth scene of the fourth act, where the queen, abandoning herself to despair, speaks these noble lines :

" Que fais-je ? où ma raison va-t-elle s'égarer ?

" Moi jalouse ! & Thésée est celui que j'implore !

" Mon époux est vivant, & moi je brûle encore !

• Mart. Ep. B. 1. Ep. 14.

- " Pour qui ? quel est le cœur où prétendent mes vœux !
 " Chaque mot sur mon front fait dresser mes cheveux.
 " Mes crimes désormais ont comblé la mesure ;
 " Je respire à la fois l'inceste & l'imposture :
 " Mes homicides mains promptes à me vanger
 " Dans le sang innocent brûlent de se plonger.
 " Misérable ! & je vis ! & je soutiens la vûe
 " De ce sacré Soleil dont je suis descendue !
 " J'ai pour ayeul le pere & le maître des Dieux ;
 " Le Ciel, tout l'univers est plein de mes ayeux.
 " Où me cacher ? fuyons dans la nuit infernale :
 " Mais que dis-je ? mon pere y tient l'urne fatale :
 " Le sort, dit-on, l'a mise en ses sévères mains :
 " Minos juge aux enfers tous les pâles humains.
 " Ah, combien frémira son ombre épouvantée,
 " Lorsqu'il verra sa fille à ses yeux présentée,
 " Contrainte d'avouer tant de forfaits divers,
 " Et des crimes peut-être inconnus aux enfers, &c."

This tragedy of Seneca concludes at length with the most horrible spectacle imaginable. The attendants bring to the distracted father the scattered limbs of his son, which he places to the body, in the same manner exactly as the Gods did those of Pelops. Tantalus had caused him to be killed, and his limbs served up to table. Ceres, being hungry, eat a shoulder: so that the Gods were obliged to substitute an ivory shoulder in its stead. Theseus had occasion for a like miracle, to make out the mangled limbs of Hippolitus: however, he places such as he could discover, and the rest by chance. The last scene in Racine's play, in which the whole is unravelled, shews Theseus and Phedra in a more judicious situation. The queen, who had swallowed poison, has just life enough remaining to clear Hippolitus, and gives Theseus an immediate revenge. The few words uttered by the unfortunate king, after this explanation, shew the hand of a master, who knew how to conclude when it was necessary he should, and the long speech of Seneca that of a declaimer, who could neither begin nor end with propriety.

This would be the proper place to mention Pradon's tragedy upon the story of Phedra and Hippolitus, were it not degrading the authors of whom we have been speaking, to draw any comparison between him and them. However, it should be remembered,

bered, that this poet, elated with the undeserved success of Pyramus and Thisbe, a little discouraged by the fall of his Tamerlane, and privately stimulated by persons of the first quality, to write a tragedy in three months, upon the same subject which Racine had been two years in polishing, durst venture to struggle with a genius, which Andromache, Britannicus, Mithridates and Iphigenia had already rendered infinitely superior to all his cotemporary rivals. But this would appear incredible, if in the same age such examples had not been frequent: so that at present we see a poet, who is so totally sunk in oblivion, that his works are no longer to be found, supporting himself with advantage against one of the master-pieces of the French theatre. However, the delirium will last but a short time: true taste will resume its sway in spite of cabals and sneerers. The phantom falls of itself, and at length vanishes into nothing. Yet this presumption of Pradon's, which was then called emulation, produced something more than a literary contest: for we are told that it could not be decided but by the interposition of some persons of the first rank. As madam Deshouliers took the part of Pradon, although he was not so good a poet as herself, her pen produced a famous sonnet, which was turned different ways upon the same rhyme, and which at last became no jesting matter. Then shot up criticisms and dissertations upon the two Phedra's: a sort of meteors which are often seen in France, and which disappear when the work under examination is allowed to be good. One of these dissertations fell into my hands, in which I found no well-grounded objections to Racine's tragedy, except to certain touches which I have already observed, and to the first scene, which I have not taken notice of. There seems to be some reason for condemning a governor who uses his endeavours to remove the scruples of his pupil, and to persuade him not only to love, but to love Aricia, the enemy of the house of Theseus. Yet after all, this fault will admit of extenuation, at least in what regards Aricia, of whom Theramenes says,

“ Jamais l'aimable sœur des cruels Pallantides

“ Trempa-t-elle aux complots de ses freres perfides ?

“ Et devez-vous haïr ses innocens appas ?

As to Pradon, he was so apprehensive of wounding the manners of our age, by following Euripides and Seneca, that in his piece, Theseus, Phedra, and Hippolitus, are hardly to be known. He could not have succeeded better, if he had really designed to have ren-

rendered them ridiculous; but although the dispute had only lain between the verification of the two plays, it seems amazing, that Paris could balance one moment between the best and the worst. This is one of those prodigies which are common enough, yet always appear new.

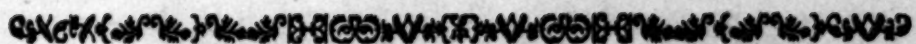
From what has been said of the tragedies of Euripides, Seneca, and Racine, upon the subject of Phedra, it is easy to conclude, that Seneca has only spoiled that of Euripides, and that Racine has blended in his all that is good in both theirs: that he has taken from Euripides the entire character of Phedra, the disorder of her mind, her broken speeches, that constant struggle between virtue and love, which throw so great an interest in the play: that address with which the secret escapes her, and upon which the whole plot turns, and where Seneca has so greatly failed; the rage of Theseus against his son, the timid defence made by the innocent youth, the recital of his death, without reckoning many of those delicate touches, which can only be pointed out in as many words. We find, on the other hand, that he has borrowed from Seneca that celebrated scene, where Phedra herself declares her passion to Hippolitus, the circumstance of the sword left in the hands of Phedra, that beautiful despair already mentioned, part of the recital that is given of the prince's death, the queen's confession of her guilt, a confession which has spared the machine made use of by Euripides; many beautiful verses happily imitated, or introduced with more propriety than by the author, and especially that artful manner in which a woman madly in love declares her passion, while she seems to disavow it. The following is part of this declaration on which the French poet has improved.

PHEDRA. Yes, Hippolitus, I burn for Theseus still; but for Theseus as he was, when in the bloom of youth he attacked the Cretan monster, when guided by a clue, he eluded the vain mazes of the labyrinth. Oh Gods! how lovely did he then appear! his graceful locks were tied, the blush of noble modesty glowed on his cheeks, the warrior's nervous force, and all youth's softer graces were in him united. He resembled thy Diana, or my Apollo, but he more resembled thee. Such, doubtless, did he appear when he became the vanquisher of his fair foe Antiope. Such were the charms that adorned him when he met her eyes, all negligently lovely. Yes, Hippolitus, thy father's youth revives in thee, but mixed with the fiercer beauties of the Amazon who gave thee birth. Ah, where wert thou, my prince, when Theseus landed
first

first in Crete? for thee, my sister Ariadne, would have formed the fatal clue.

Racine, therefore, in this tragedy, has little more his own than the episode of Aricia, which is indeed entirely his: for the ancients never introduced these love episodes in their plays. Yet this imitation ought not to deprive him of any part of his fame: and, if he has always excelled Seneca, and very often Euripides, by making use of their thoughts, the art of chusing judiciously what to imitate, must, as I have already said, turn to the advantage of the Greek poet, without prejudice to the French, of whom Boileau so justly says,

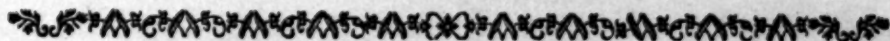
“ Hé qui, voyant un jour la douleur vertueuse
 “ De Phedre malgré soi perfide, incestueuse,
 “ D'un si noble travail justement étonné
 “ Ne bénira d'bord le siècle fortuné,
 “ Qui rendu plus fameux par tes illustres veilles
 “ Vit naître sous ta main ces pompeuses merveilles !”



IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

A

TRAGEDY BY EURIPIDES.



VOL. I.

X x

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

TRAGEDY BY EURIPIDES

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

X

Vol. I

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.
AGAMEMNON.
AN OLD MAN, an officer of Agamemnon's household.
The CHOIR.
MENELAUS.
CELYSTEMNESTRIS.
The SUBJECT.

THIS story is well known. It is the famous sacrifice of Iphigenia, which has been mentioned so differently by the poets. Euripides supposes that this young princess was preserved by Diana, the Goddess to whom she was to be sacrificed, and transported into Tauris, while another victim fell under the sacred knife. This idea seems to have taken its rise from Abraham's sacrifice of his son, confounded with that of Jephtha's daughter.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AGAMEMNON.

An OLD MAN, an officer of Agamemnon's household *.

The CHORUS, composed of the women of Chalcis.

MENELAUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ACHILLES.

A MESSENGER.

SOLDIERS.

The TRAIN of Clytemnestra.

The Scene is in Aulis†, a city and port of Beotia.

* This actor played two parts, that of the confidant of Agamemnon, and of a man devoted to the interests of Clytemnestra. He has therefore two different titles in the Greek editions, tho' it is the same person.

† Aulis and Chalcis were two cities separated by the Euripus, at present the streights of Negrepont. The former is in Beotia, the second in Eubœa.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS:

A

TRAGEDY BY EURIPIDES.

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A C T the F I R S T.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

AGAMEMNON, an OLD MAN, one of the officers of  
his household.

AGAMEMNON.

**F**OLLOW me, friend, to this gate.

OLD MAN.

I will obey thee, my sovereign ; but may I ask what new projects  
have broke thy slumber at this early hour ?

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt know.

OLD MAN.

Age and infirmities have driven sleep from my eyes ; but thou--

AGAMEMNON.

What star is this which shines just over our heads ?

OLD MAN.

It is the bright star of the celestial dog \*. Scarce has it finish-  
ed half its course, and yet----

AGA-

---

\* The Greek adds, the neighbour of *the* be rendered in the French ; they appear  
*seven Pleiades*. These sort of epithets cannot cold and spiritless.



AGAMEMNON.

All yet is silence ; the winds, the waves, the birds, the Euripus, all sleep.

OLD MAN.

Why then, oh Agamemnon, hast thou left thy tent so soon ? when silence and repose reign over Aulis ; even the centinels seem oppress'd with sleep ? retire again, my prince, I beg thee.

AGAMEMNON.

Happy old man, happy in thy humble station ! Oh, how I envy the calm blis of those who live remote from noise and tumult, without glory, and without care ! Oh grandeur, how wretched are thy votaries !

OLD MAN.

How ! is not greatness desirable, then ?

AGAMEMNON.

Oh false lustre ! honours, how vain, how empty ! while in pursuit, what charms does fancy give them ; but when they are possess'd, they are found full of misery. In a rank like mine, if we obey not the cruel orders of the Gods, if we yield not to the caprices of men, we are equally unhappy.

OLD MAN.

Prince, I must presume to tell thee, these complaints are neither just, nor worthy of a mighty monarch. \* Did Atreus, think'st thou

Imitations by RACINE.

ARCAS. C'est vous-même, Seigneur ! Quel important besoin  
Vous a fait devancer l'Aurore de si loin ?  
A peine un foible jour vous éclaire & me guide ;  
Vos yeux seuls & les miens sont ouverts dans l'Aulide.  
Avez-vous dans les airs entendu quelque bruit ?  
Les vents nous auroient-ils exaucés cette nuit ?  
Mais tout dort, & l'armée, & les vents, & Neptune.

AGAMEMNON. Heureux qui satisfait de son humble fortune  
Libre du joug superbe où je suis attaché,  
Vit dans l'état obscur où les Dieux l'ont caché.

ACT I. Sc. I.

\* Mais parmi tant d'honneurs vous êtes homme enfin.  
Tandis que vous vivrez le sort qui toujours change  
Ne vous a point promis un bonheur sans mélange.  
Bientôt—Mais quels malheurs dans ce billet tracés  
Vous arrachent, Seigneur, les pleurs que vous versez.

Votre

thou, give thee birth to possess pure and unmixed bliss? Oh mortal, joy and grief are equally thy lot! Such is the decree of fate, and all must yield to it. Yet thou, prince, wearest out the night in restless inquietude; thou sittest by a torch's feeble ray, sometimes employed in writing a letter, sometimes in erasing what thou hast written; thou sealest it; thou openest it again, and then with hasty rage thou throwest it away, and weepest. Yes, thou didst shed a torrent of tears: and see, the fatal letter is still in thy hands; surely grief and irresolution have weakened thy reason. What is it that afflicts thee? what new misfortune has happened to thee? Tell me, I conjure thee: let my long-tried faith move thee. Hast thou forgot the rank in which \* Tyndarus placed me with thy queen?

A G A M E M N O N.

† Hear then the cause of that grief which now oppresses me. Thou knowest, that of the three daughters of Leda, Phœbe, my queen Clytemnestra, and Helena; the latter drew the vows of all the Grecian princes, and was likely to be the fatal source of bloody discords among the rejected lovers. Tyndarus foresaw this, and was a long time doubtful, whether he should fix his choice. At length he thought of an expedient to prevent those miseries he feared: he prevailed upon the rivals to embrace, to pour libations on the burning victims, and to bind ‡ themselves by the most sacred oaths, to assist the husband of Helena, whomsoever that husband should be, with all their forces, against any one who should attempt to rob him of her, to pursue the ravisher, whether a Greek or a

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|            |                                                    |              |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
|            | Votre Oreste au berceau va-t-il finir sa vie ?     |              |
|            | Pleurez-vous Clytemnestre ou bien Iphigénie ?      |              |
|            | Qu'est-ce qu'on vous écrit ? daignez m'en avertir. | A& I. Sc. I. |
| AGAMEMNON. | La Reine qui dans Sparte avoit connu ta foi        |              |
|            | T'a placé dans le rang que tu tiens de moi.        | Ibid.        |

\* Literally, Tyndarus gave me to thy wife, as part of her portion, and I devote myself to her service.

Imitations by RACINE.

† Tu vois mon trouble; apprends ce qui le cause,  
 Et juge s'il est tems, ami, que je repose.  
 Tu te souviens du jour qu'en Aulide assemblés  
 Nos vaisseaux par les vents sembloient être appelés.  
 Nous partions; & déjà par mille cris de joie  
 Nous menacions de loin les rivages de Troye.  
 Un prodige étonnant fit taire ce transport, &c. Ibid.

‡ Pausanias says, that Tyndarus sacrificed a horse when he exacted this oath from Helen's lovers.

bar-



barbarian, to lay waste his dominions, and destroy his \* capital. All bound themselves by a mutual oath. Tyndarus, after this engagement, refused to nominate the husband of his daughter himself, but left the choice to her. She fixed on Menelaus. Oh, that he had never been her choice! Soon after the young prince, who, it is reported, decided which was the most beautiful of the three Goddesses, came to Lacedemon, with all the pomp of Phrygian magnificence †. He loved Helena, and carried her with him to mount Ida. Menelaus, enraged at this affront, claimed the performance of his rivals oaths. The Greeks took up arms, and assembled in Aulis, with vessels, bucklers, chariots, and all the equipage of war: they espoused my brother's quarrel, and elected me their general. --- Fatal dignity! why did it not fall into other hands. The impossibility of sailing detained the impatient army long upon the shore. Calchas was consulted, but kept a melancholy silence: at length he answered, that a victim must be sacrificed to the tutelary Divinity of this place, and that victim must be --- my daughter Iphigenia. Such is the price by which we must purchase favourable winds, and the glory of subverting Troy. ‡ Struck with astonishment and grief at this distracting oracle, and

\* By the Greeks besieging Troy, it is to be observed, that the princes were obliged by their oath to lead the forces against the capital of the ravisher's dominions, or that

city, at least, to which he retired for security.

† The Greek is, *Βασιλεὺς Ἰφιδναίου Βαρβα-  
rico luxu.* The Greeks and Phrygians called each other reciprocally barbarians.

Imitations by RACINE.

‡ Surpris comme tu peux penser

Je sentis dans mon corps tout mon sang se glacer :

Je demeurai sans voix, & n'en repris l'usage

Que par mille sanglots qui se firent passage, &c.

De ma fille en pleurant j'ordonnai le supplice :

Mais de bras d'une mere il falloit l'arracher.

Quel funeste artifice il me fallut chercher !

D'Achille qui l'aimoit j'empruntai le langage :

J'écrivis en Argos pour hâter ce voyage,

Que ce Guerrier presse de partir avec nous

Vouloit revoil ma fille, & partir son époux.

ULYSSE.

N'est ce pas vous enfin de qui la voix pressante

Nous a tous appelés au campagnes du Xante,

Et qui de ville en ville attestiez les sermens

Que d'Hélène autrefois firent tous les amans,

Quand presque tans les Grecs rivaux de votre frere

Le demandoient en foule à Tyndare son pere ?

De quelque heureux époux que l'on dût faire choix

Nous jourâmes dès-lors de défendre ses droits,

Et si quelque insolent lui voloit sa conquête,

Nos mains du ravisseur lui promirent la tête.

ACT I. Sc. III.

fully

fully determined not to sacrifice a victim so dear to me. I ordered Talthibius to disband the army ; but the arguments of Menelaus at length prevailed : I signed the barbarous sentence. I wrote to the queen, and commanded her to bring her daughter with the utmost speed to Aulis, where she was to be given in marriage to Achilles. I extolled the merit of this young hero, and, to hasten Clytemnestra, I said, that he would not sail to Troy without the tide of Iphigenia's husband. *O* It was thus that I concealed from the unhappy mother the intended sacrifice of her daughter, under the disguise of marriage. The fatal secret is known only to Calchas, Ulysses, Menelaus, and myself : but at length, a father's tenderness has prevailed, in this letter, which thou hast this night seen me so often fold and open, I have revoked my former order : take it then, and fly with it to Argos—Yet stay, I know thy fidelity and thy affection for my queen and family ; I will confide to thee what I have written. “ \* Receive, oh Clytemnestra, from thy husband, “ an order very different from the former.”

OLD MAN.

Proceed, prince, do not conceal any part of this letter from me, that what I say to the queen may be consistent with it.

AGAMEMNON.

“ Send not thy daughter to Aulis ; her marriage is deferred till “ a more convenient time.”—

OLD MAN.

† But will not the fiery Achilles, when he finds himself disappointed in so sweet a hope, will he not instantly fly to vengeance ? The affair is delicate.

AGAMEMNON.

Achilles, without knowing it, lends us his name. He is ignorant of the intended sacrifice, and the feigned scheme of his mar-

Imitations by RACINE.

- Pour renvoyer la fille & la mere offensée,  
Je leur écris qu'Achille a changé de pensée.
- † Et ne craignez-vous point l'impatient Achille ?  
Avez-vous prétendu que muet & tranquille  
Ce Héros qu'armera l'amour & la raison  
Vous laisse pour ce meurtre abuser de son nom ?  
Verra-t-il à ses yeux son amante immolée ?



riage. Fortunately also, he knew not that my daughter was destined for his bride before that fatal oracle was pronounced.

OLD MAN.

Thy enterprize was dangerous indeed: how was it possible for thee to abandon so dear a victim to Diana and the Greeks? Thy daughter, and Achilles' wife!

AGAMEMNON.

Alas, grief has disturbed my reason--- Oh miserable father!----  
\* But fly, fly to the queen; remember not that thou art old, and thy limbs stiff with years.

OLD MAN.

This instant will I fly to her.

AGAMEMNON.

Let not the refreshing shade invite thee to rest thy wearied limbs; Oh, let not sleep surprise thee on the bank of some murmuring stream.

OLD MAN.

Judge better of my eagerness to serve thy will.

AGAMEMNON.

Above all, be sure to observe, when thou comest to those roads which divide and lead to different paths, whether my daughter's chariot has not taken that towards the Grecian vessels: mark even the traces of the wheels.

OLD MAN.

Rely upon my care.

Imitations by RACINE.

- \* Prends cette lettre. Cours au-devant de la Reine,  
Et suis sans t'arrêter le chemin de Mycène.  
Dès que tu la verras défends-lui d'avancer,  
Et rends-lui ce billet que je viens de tracer.  
Mais ne t'écarte point, prends un fidèle guide.  
Si ma fille une fois met le pied dans l'Aulide,  
Elle est morte, &c.

ACT I. Sc. I.

AG A.

AGAMEMNON.

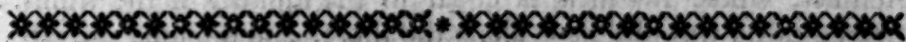
I will detain thee no longer; go instantly, and if thou should'st meet the chariot, turn back the horses to the road of Argos\*.

OLD MAN.

But by what token shall I find credit with the queen?

AGAMEMNON.

Here, take my seal †, which I have used to the letter thou bearest to the queen. Aurora begins to appear, and the sun's bright chariot approaches: go, and relieve me from this anxiety. Alas! how fatally am I convinced, that no mortal can be called happy before his death!



I N T E R L U D E.

The CHORUS.

‡ I have quitted Chalcis, my native country, Chalcis watered by STROPHE L. the celebrated Arethusa; I have crossed the Euripus, to come to Aulis, and behold the formidable army of the Greeks, their thousand vessels, and their mighty warriors. What transport warms my bosom, to see my husband in this magnificent fleet, ready to fight the battles of Menelaus and Agamemnon, and revenge their wrongs! Soon will the licentious Paris repent of having forced Helena from the shores of Eurotas §. This haughty shepherd shall boast in vain of having received her as a gift from Venus, when

\* Euripides says, to the road which leads to that city built by the Cyclops. He means either Argos or Mycene, and almost always confounds these two cities, probably on account of their proximity, which Sophocles in his *Electra* never does: in effect they were very different places. Agamemnon was the first who united them under his dominion.

† The seals of the ancients had always figures on them. Pliny says, that Cæsar had a Sphinx upon his.

‡ The subject of the interlude, which separates each act, arises from the tragedy, and each interlude has a particular relation

to the act which precedes it. They add force to the impression, and keep up the attention of the spectator. This interlude which shews us as in perspective twenty kings at the head of a powerful army, and a thousand vessels ranged in the port of Aulis, in imitation of Homer, produces a finer effect than the *Iliad*. For it raises the expectation of the audience, by the important circumstance of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, upon which the fate of all Greece depends.

§ A river of Lacedemon, which empties itself in the gulph of Laconia.



seated on the bank of a clear rivulet, that goddesses disputed before him the prize of beauty with Juno and Minerva.

ANTISTRO-  
PHE I.

With awful reverence I passed through the woods consecrated to Diana. Led by an innocent curiosity, I came to view at leisure the tents, the arms, the horses of the Greeks. I saw the two \* Ajax's, one of whom is the boast of Salamin; I saw them, with Protefilaus, amusing themselves with peaceful † sports. I saw Palamedes ‡, the grandson of Neptune, and Diomedes § playing at the quoit. I saw Merion, that favourite of Mars, that prodigy of valour, and with him saw Laertes' son, who has left his rocky islands to join the Grecian army, and Nireus, the most graceful of the Grecian princes.

EPODE I.

The son of Thetis too I saw, the celebrated pupil of Chiron, Achilles, whose swiftness is equal to the rapidity of the winds. Armed as he was, he flew along the shore, and disputed the race with a chariot drawn by four coursers of equal strength and beauty. Their reins were gold: those two which were fastened to the pole, were spotted with white. The two others, who were wholly obedient to the will of the driver, had yellow manes, skins a little spotted, and admirable legs. Still do I view Eumelus the king of Pheres \*, animating with his voice and whip his fiery coursers, while the son of Peleus, though on foot, and clad in heavy armour, seems to fly beside the wheels.

STROPHI II.

From thence I went to view that amazing number of vessels, which presents the eye with a spectacle so grand. On the right hand lay the Myrmidon † fleet, composed of fifty ships: upon the

\* One of them was the son of Oileus, the other of Telamon. The latter was king of the isle and city of Salamin: it was he who disputed with Ulysses the armour of Achilles.

† The poet call these games *πιστῶν μορφῶν* *πολυπλοῦς tessararium formas multiplicet.*

‡ Palamedes, the son of Nauplius, prince of Eubœa.

§ Diomedes, son of Tydeus, king of Etolia, and except Achilles, the most valiant of all the Greeks.

\* Phères, a city and little state of Thessaly, near the lake Bebia, which separates it from Magnesia.

† The Chorus gives an account here of all the armaments of the several parts of Greece. If we cast our eyes upon the map, we shall meet with the Myrmidons first, a people of

Thessaly, whom the fable says had formerly been ants; then the Argives in Peloponnesus; afterwards the Beotians to the north of Attica: then advancing still towards the north, we meet with the Phocians, the Locrians, the Enians. From thence, we must go back to Peloponnesus to find Mycene in Argolide; then the Pylus or Pyle of Nestor, at a small distance from the gulph Chelonites, but different from another Pyle, which is in Messenia, upon the same coast of the Ionian sea, and which was so long contested for by the Athenians and Lacedæmonians (as we shall see when we come to speak of Aristophanes in the third part of this work.) A single glance of the map will be more satisfactory than geographical definitions.

poops

poops appeared the golden statues of the Nereids, by which the forces of Achilles are distinguished.

At a little distance I beheld the Argive fleet, equal in number to that of Achilles: it is commanded by Euryalus, the son of Mecistus, and by Sthelenus the son of Capaneus. The next is the fleet of Theseus' son, who brings sixty sail of ships from Attica, bearing for their symbol the statue of Minerva; a favourable sign to him by land and sea, and placed on all his chariots and his vessels.

Afterwards I beheld the fifty sail of the Boeotians, ornamented with their peculiar symbol, which is Cadmus\*, holding in his hand a golden serpent. Leitus, descended from the sons of the earth, commands these naval forces, and comes from Phocis. The son of Oeilus, from the city of Thronia, commands a like number of ships for the Locrians.

Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, brings a hundred vessels from Mycene. Under him commands the brave Adrastus†, who takes a friend's interest in the injury offered to his friend, which is become the concern of all the Grecian princes, ever since the perjured Helen left Menelaus her first lord, to follow a foreign spouse. The vessels of old Nestor, king of Pylus, come next; his symbol is a figure seated at the foot of Taurus. It is Alpheus, the God of the river which bears his name.

The Eniens have twelve ships commanded by king Goneus. Then follow the princes of Elis, who are called Epeans. Eurytus is their leader. Meges, the son of Phyla, commands the fleet of the Taphiens‡, with the white oars. Willingly he left the Echinades, those isles which are inaccessible to mariners, and brought his forces to the assistance of the sons of Atreus. Ajax of Salamin

\* Cadmus, the founder of Thebes: he was transformed into a serpent.

† Joshua Barnes is of opinion, that the word *Adrastus*, is not the name of a man, but an epithet given to Menelaus. He adds, that Euripides must be mistaken here; because Adrastus, king of Sycion, died before the Trojan war. And this is most probable: for Euripides, he says, is mistaken in the second epode of the same Chorus, where he makes Eurytus the leader of the Epeans. Homer names four others, one of whom is the son of this Eurytus. However, the traditions upon the war of

Troy were very different, and we had better be contented with this explanation than undergo the labour of comparing Homer's enumeration of the Grecian ships with this given us here by Euripides, to prove at last that the tragic poet is mistaken.

‡ The Taphiens were inhabitants of Taphia, an island in the Ionian sea, so called from Taphius, the offspring of Neprune and Hippotheca, the daughter of Nestor. This island is one of the Echinades, opposite to the mouth of the river Archelous. See the map.



joins the two wings together, and closes the fleet with twelve ships so well equipped, that, if we may believe those who shew them, no foreign vessel can avoid being taken by them. All this I have seen and heard, and never will the remembrance of an armament so glorious be banished from my mind.

---

A C T the S E C O N D.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

MENELAUS, the OLD MAN.

OLD MAN.

**W**HAT hast thou done, prince? does this violence become a king, and the brother of Agamemnon?

MENELAUS.

Away, thou carriest thy fidelity too far.

OLD MAN.

Thy reproaches are my glory.

MENELAUS.

Thou shalt repent this insolence.

OLD MAN.

Ought I to suffer letters to be opened of which I am the bearer?

MENELAUS.

\* This fatal letter contains ruin to the Grecian cause. Oughtest thou to deliver it then?

OLD MAN.

It is needless to dispute the matter, my lord; restore the letter.

---

\* Some are of opinion, that Menelaus in this verse reproaches the old servant with his knowledge of a conspiracy against the Greeks, and that he answers *This is a private affair; thou hast no business with it.* This

refinement is quite trifling: it renders the text obscure; mine is the natural and obvious meaning, which is plainly enough expressed.

MENELAUS.

I will not part with it.

OLD MAN.

Nor will I leave it in thy hands.

MENELAUS.

\* Take care that thy presumption be not punished with a speedy death.

OLD MAN.

To die for my master is honourable.

MENELAUS.

Be gone, wretch, I have talked too long to a slave.

OLD MAN.

Oh Agamemnon, where art thou? we are betrayed: Menelaus is deaf to the voice of justice, and forces thy secret from me.

SCENE the SECOND.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, the OLD MAN, CHORUS.

AGAMEMNON.

What mean these cries, and this disorder?

OLD MAN.

† Hear me, my sovereign, it is fit that I, and not Menelaus, should answer thee.

AGAMEMNON, *sending away his servant.*

How has this man offended thee, Menelaus, that thou offerest him this violence?

MENELAUS.

First look upon me, if thou dar'st---then I will speak.

\* In the Greek it is, *I will break thy head with my sceptre.* Thersites is threatened with the same punishment in Homer.

† The old man withdraws after this speech; it is not proper that he should be a

witness of the quarrel between the two kings. We must suppose this actor does the same, when he has revealed the secret to Clytemnestra, in the third scene of the fourth act.

AGA-



AGAMEMNON.

Am I a king, and the son of Atreus, and shall I tremble before thee! shall I not dare to meet thy looks?

MENE LAUS.

Knowest thou this letter, this letter in which a horrid mystery is contained?

AGAMEMNON.

Begin, by restoring it, and I will hear what thou hast to say.

MENE LAUS.

Yes, I will restore it, but not till the Greeks have seen what is in it.

AGAMEMNON.

And wilt thou dare to open it, then?

MENE LAUS.

I will; and, to mortify thee still more, the crime which thou hast so secretly committed shall be made public now.

AGAMEMNON.

From whom hast thou taken this letter? Oh Gods! (*Aside*) From whence proceeds this insolence?

MENE LAUS.

From my ardent wish to see thy daughter here.

AGAMEMNON.

What right hast thou to penetrate into my secrets without my permission?

MENE LAUS.

My will gives me the right I claim; am I to take laws from thee?

AGAMEMNON.

Is not this a barbarous outrage? am I not master of my own family, and king of the Greeks?

MENE LAUS.

Hear me, Agamemnon: let us speak calmly to each other. Thy resolutions are not fixed: every day produces some new change---this weakness will ruin us.

AG A-

## AGAMEMNON.

And thy indiscretion will be fatal to me. An incautious tongue is a very dangerous evil.

## MENE LAUS.

A wavering mind is worse: it is unjust; it is base. Let not the violence of thy temper make thee hate the truth, which thou shalt hear from me \*. Recal to thy remembrance the time when thou with so much ardor wishedst to be elected general of the Grecian army in the Trojan war: even thy refusal to accept this dignity but thinly veiled thy ambition to be possessed of it. How popular wert thou then! how lavish wert thou of thy favours! Thou gavest free access to whoever desired it, or desired it not. Thy palace was open to all. It was thus, that by affability and gentleness thou didst purchase of us the rank to which thou art raised: and how didst thou reward us afterwards? When thou hadst attained the summit of thy wishes, thou instantly altered'st thy conduct. Thou would'st no longer be known to thy friends. Access to thee became difficult. Thou livedst in a solitary † state, and scarce wert visible to any one. Was such a change worthy of a king, to whom power supreme had been confided? Oughtest thou not rather to have been so much the more constant in thy friendship, as fortune had enabled thee to be generous? Now thou knowest my first subject of complaint, and thy first error. When thou didst arrive in Aulis, and the whole army with thee, the angry Gods denied us a favourable wind: the Greeks, weary of this delay, solicited thee to send away the fleet, and not to continue any longer idle in Aulis. What was to become of thee then? What title would sound pleasing in thy ear, when thou hadst lost that of king of kings, the command of a thousand ships, and of a powerful army, ready to pour upon the Trojan fields? What shall I do? saidst thou to me; what resolution shall I take? Thou trembled'st; own the truth; thou trembled'st, lest thou should'st be deprived of that high rank

Imitations by RACINE.

- \* Moi-même (je l'avoue avec quelque pudeur.)  
 Charmé de mon pouvoir & plein de ma grandeur.  
 Ces noms de Roi des Roi & de chef de la Grèce  
 Chatouilloient de mon cœur l'orgueilleuse foiblesse.

Act I. Sc. I.

† The text is, *ἔγω μάλιστ' ἐν κλεινῇ, rarus intrā claustra.* Il faut *ἔγω.* Emil. Portus is in the right: it must be, *thou art seldom seen out of thy palace, and bidest thyself like a tyrant.*



which so greatly flattered thy pride. Calchas sacrificed to the Gods, and promised us a happy voyage, provided Iphigenia was offered up a victim to Diana. To this thou didst consent: thou sentest, voluntarily thou sentest (therefore plead not violence in this case) an order to thy queen to send her daughter hither, on pretence of marrying her to Achilles. I attest Jupiter and this air \* the witness of thy words: and now when thou art called upon to perform thy promises, thy mind is altered; thou writest clandestinely to thy queen, and thou determinest not to sacrifice Iphigenia. † But thus it generally happens. Nothing seems too hard for men to perform who aim at power and honours, which they often obtain from the suffrages of the blind multitude. This power and these honours once possessed, they shamefully recoil; yet not without reason neither, since they feel themselves unable to support the weight of that supreme grandeur to which they are raised, and of nobly serving the public. As for me, I am more concerned for the interest of Greece than for my own. It is the misfortune of Greece which I lament. Disappointed in her hope of taking a glorious revenge upon a barbarous nation, she sees her conquest snatched from her hands, and, instead of being their terror, becomes their jest. Thou, Agamemnon, art the cause of this disgrace. Never ought wealth to be a sufficient motive for conferring on any man the command of a city or an army. A general ought to be distinguished for his fortitude. Any man who possesses that quality, is able to hold the reins of government.

## C H O R U S.

How terrible are the quarrels between brethren!

## A G A M E M N O N.

It is now my turn to complain; and I shall do it by a juster title, and in fewer words, in this more moderate towards my brother, than he has been to me; for moderation ever accompanies candor. Say then, by what madness art thou seized, that thou breathest nothing but blood and carnage? Who has wronged thee? what is thy design? To be happy in thy marriage; is it my fault thou art not so, or is it in my power to restore what thou hast lost? If thou

\* I have added to the air, the God of upon Euripides this swearing by the air. the air, which is the poet's thought. In † This passage has perplexed translators the third part of this work we shall find greatly. I believe I have hit the sense of it Aristophanes charging it as a crime by a slight transposition.

hast not been able to preserve thy conquest, ought I to be the victim of thy imprudence? Is it my exalted rank that wounds thee? or wouldst thou purchase back an ungrateful beauty at the expence of reason and of honour? Pleasure so dearly bought, is unworthy of a virtuous man. Thou chargest me with having changed my mind; and am I then to be condemned for having quitted a bad resolution for one more equitable? or rather, art not thou more guilty, thou whom an indulgent God has delivered from a fury, yet wouldst resume her at any price? The oaths thou pleadest were sworn by her rash lovers\*: love was the Deity who dictated it to them and thee; be the performance of it thine and theirs. Yet the day will come, (and I trust I shall see it also) when thou wilt acknowledge that this oath was weak, and by compulsion sworn. Hear, then, my last resolves: I will not, Menelaus, be the murderer of my children; pursue, if thou wilt, thy plan of vengeance for a faithless wife. It is thy passion: but I will not sacrifice my blood for the Greeks; too many tears would such a sacrifice cost me. I have now explained myself: if thou wilt not yield to the force of reason, I am able to assert my right.

CHORUS.

These words of Agamemnon agree but ill with his past promises; but can a father be blamed for refusing to shed the blood of his daughter?

MENE LAUS.

I am undone; my friends forsake me.

AGAMEMNON.

Force them not to ruin themselves, and they will serve thee still.

MENE LAUS.

Alas, I no longer find a brother in Agamemnon!

AGAMEMNON.

I espouse thy just resentments, but I will not aid thy fury.

MENE LAUS.

Ought not a friend to share the troubles of his friend?

\* *Ἐλπίς*; *Οὐδὲ*, *Spes* *Dia*, which comes to the same thing with my expression.

Imitations by RACINE.

ULYSSE. Mais sans vous ce serment que l'Amour a dicté  
Libres de cet amour, l'aurions-nous respecté?

Act I. Sc. III.



AGAMEMNON.

Put my friendship to the trial when I can serve thee without making myself for ever wretched.

MENELAUS.

Is Greece become indifferent to thee, then?

AGAMEMNON.

Some black Divinity possesses Greece as well as thee.

MENELAUS.

Ah, it is too plain. Dazzled with the lustre of that sceptre which thou swayest, thou canst unmoved betray thy brother—it is well, I shall find other resources, and will be obliged to other friends.

### SCENE the THIRD.

To them a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Oh king of the Greeks, happy Agamemnon, thy daughter Iphigenia is arrived; the queen and thy young son Orestes have accompanied her to Aulis: after so long an absence, what transport will this meeting give thee! I left the queen and princess seated on the border of a clear fountain; tired with their journey they repose themselves there: our horses feed in the neighbouring meadow. The news of thy daughter's arrival is already spread throughout Aulis: the army gather in crowds about the princess. The great and happy are always sure to draw the looks

Imitations by RACINE.

EURYBATE. \* La reine, dont ma course a devancé les pas,  
Va remettre bientôt sa fille entre vos bras—  
Déjà de leur abord la nouvelle est semée;  
Et déjà de soldats une foule charmée  
Sur-tout d'Iphigénie admittant la beauté,  
Pousse au ciel mille vœux pour sa félicité.  
Les uns avec respect environnoient la reine;  
D'autres me demandoient le sujet qui l'amène.  
Mais tous ils confessoient que si jamais les Dieux  
Ne mirent sur le Thrône une Roi plus glorieux,  
Egalement comblé de leurs faveurs secrètes,  
Jamais pere ne fut plus heureux que vous l'êtes.  
Eurybate, il suffit. Vous pouvez nous laisser,  
Le reste me regarde, & je vais y penser.

AGAMEMNON.

ACT I. Sc. III.

and

and veneration of mankind. " Happy the prince, they cry, who  
" is to possess so lovely a bride! Where will the nuptial feast be  
" celebrated? or has Agamemnon only sent for her, to have the  
" pleasure of beholding her again after so long an absence? Doubt-  
" less, say others, they design to \* present her to Diana, the tut-  
" lary Goddess of Aulis. What happy hand will lead her to the  
" altar?" But why do you delay, princes? Prepare the sacri-  
fice, adorn your heads with flowers: the palace should resound with  
rejoicings, the sprightly dance, and the sweet breathing instru-  
ments should celebrate this day, so fortunate for Iphigenia.

AGAMEMNON.

Enough; thou may'st retire: fortune will take of care all the rest.

SCENE the FOURTH.

AGAMEMNON, † MENELAUS.

AGAMEMNON.

‡ Oh miserable father! of whom shalt thou now complain?  
Alas, thou art thyself most guilty! Fortune, cruel fortune, more  
vigilant than thou, hast broken all thy measures; thy daughter is  
doomed, and yet thou dar'st not weep! Oh happy those of humble  
birth! affliction leaves them at least the sad resource of tears and  
lamentations, which it denies to us, the victims of our grandeur:  
our people are our tyrants, we their scepter'd slaves. I am a king,  
therefore I must not weep, though I am a miserable father also—  
Yet this is little—How shall I meet my wife? What shall I say to  
her? Alas, her fatal journey hither has undone me—Will she not  
think she has a right to be present at the marriage of her daughter?

\* To prepare her for marriage, as was mistaken. The remaining part of this scene  
the custom. shews that he continued on the stage; he-

† Some of the commentators will have it, fides, the ancients took great care never to  
that Menelaus withdraws, and immediately introduce or dismiss their actors without just  
after returns again: but they are certainly cause.

Imitations by Racine.

AGAMEMNON. ‡ Juste Ciel, c'est ainsi qu'assurant ta vengeance  
Tu romps tous les ressorts de ma vaine prudence,  
Encor si je pouvois, libre dans mon malheur,  
Par des larmes au moins soulager ma douleur!  
Triste destin des Rois! esclaves que nous sommes  
Et des rigueurs du sort, & des discours des hommes,  
Nous nous voyons sans cesse assiégés de témoins,  
Et les plus malheureux osent pleurer le moins.

ACT. Sc. V.

Ah,



Ah, she has but too well answered my treacherous views, by bringing to Aulis the innocent victim ! Oh, my daughter, not to Achilles art thou destined, but to the gloomy Pluto !---And now methinks I see thy wretched mother prostrate at my feet. " Inhuman father, she seems to say, is this the marriage which waits thy Iphigenia ? Oh may'st thou, and those which are dearest to thee, always celebrate the like ! The young Orestes too, innocently cries, Ah Paris, why didst thou force Helena hence ! thou art the cause of all our miseries !"

## CHORUS.

Though a stranger, the misfortunes of these princes affect me deeply.

## MENE LAUS.

\* Permit me, brother, to touch thy hand in sign of peace.

## AGAMEMNON.

Menelaus, I consent ; thou hast conquered, and I am miserable.

## MENE LAUS.

I swear by Pelops, our common ancestor, that what I am going to say to thee comes from a heart free from all artifice and design. Oh Agamemnon, I could not unmoved behold tears flow from thy eyes : I wept like thee ; for I am not that savage Menelaus which thou think'st me, who would persuade thee to sacrifice thy daughter. No, I partake thy tenderness and affection. Iphigenia shall not fall a victim to my interests : it is not just that I should be gratified at the expence of thy happiness. And what indeed do I expect ? To be happy in my marriage !--No ; that is impossible : by this sad sacrifice I should recover an ungrateful woman, and lose a brother. Alas, I was blind, my brother, but my eyes are opened : I see, I feel the monstrous cruelty of my request. Oh Heaven ! a father to sacrifice his children † ! My brother's daughter to bleed upon the altar for my quarrel ! How has the innocent princess wronged Helena ? No, Agamemnon ; let us disband the army ;

\* A Grecian custom to express reconciliation. Suppliants touched the chin, as Iphigenia did, when she threw herself at her father's feet.

Imitations by RACINE.

ULYSSE.

† Je suis pere, Seigneur ; & foible comme une autre  
Mon cœur se met sans peine à la place du vôtre,  
Et frémissant du coup qui vous fait soupirer,  
Loin de blâmer vos pleurs, je suis prêt de pleurer.

A&I. Sc. V.

let it depart from Aulis—Cease, oh cease, my brother, to wound me with thy tears. I am, I will be no longer concerned in the barbarous oracle that demands thy daughter's life: from this moment I declare I have no part in it. Reason resumes its sway. I owe this change to my affection for a brother. It is the property of the wife to abide by that resolution which is most just.

CHORUS.

How generous are these sentiments! how worthy of the race of Tantalus! Oh Menelaus, thou dost not degenerate from thy noble ancestors!

AGAMEMNON.

So sudden, so unexpected a change affects me greatly! thou art again my brother.

MENELAUS.

Interest too often divides those by blood united: I abhor a tie weakened by mutual dissensions.

AGAMEMNON.

What thou say'st is just. But alas, this change of thine restores me not my daughter. I am now reduced to the cruel necessity of shedding her blood.

MENELAUS.

By whom art thou forced to this?

AGAMEMNON.

By the Greeks; by the whole army.

MENELAUS.

Not if thou sendest her back to Argos.

AGAMEMNON.

Though all is yet secret to the Greeks, her departure cannot be so.

MENELAUS.

And wilt thou fear the giddy multitude?

AGAMEMNON.

Calchas will reveal the fatal oracle.

MENELAUS.

He shall die, and with him die this secret: nothing is more easy to be done.

AGA-



AGAMEMNON.

He is a priest, and therefore full of ambition; and priests, however wicked they may be, are venerated.

MENE LAUS.

Priests are alike useful and dangerous. “\* We may employ them, or get rid of them at will.”

AGAMEMNON.

But thou hast not yet mentioned my chief cause of fear.

MENE LAUS.

I cannot guess it.

AGAMEMNON.

The king of Ithaca knows all.

MENE LAUS.

We have nothing to apprehend from Ulysses; he cannot hurt us.

AGAMEMNON.

Thou knowest his arts, his insinuating manners, his popular behaviour.

MENE LAUS.

Yes, and his boundless ambition.

AGAMEMNON.

† Imagine him, then, haranguing the Greeks, revealing to them the oracle pronounced by Calchas; assuring them, that I pro-

\* This verse, and the preceding one, in Latin translation, which is too literal, does the Greek, either signify what I have made not give the spirit. them signify, or they are very cold. The

Imitations by RACINE.

ULYSSES.

† Pensez vous que Calchas continue à se taire,  
Que se plaintes qu'en vain vous voudrez apaiser  
Laissent mentir les Dieux sans vous en accuser ?  
Et qui sait ce qu'aux Grecs frustrés de leur victime,  
Peut permettre un courroux qu'ils croient légitime ?  
Gardez-vous de réduire un peuple furieux,  
Seigneur, à prononcer entre vous & les Dieux.

Act I. Sc. V.

AGAMEMNON.

Seigneur, de mes efforts je connois l'impuissance ;  
Je cède, & laisse aux Dieux opprimer l'innocence.  
La victime bientôt marchera sur vos pas ;  
Allez : mais cependant faites taire Calchas,  
Et m'aidant à cacher ce funeste mystère  
Laissez-moi de l'Autel écarter une mere.

Act I. Sc. V.

mised

mis'd to sacrifice my daughter, and that I now refuse to perform that promise. His powerful eloquence will draw the whole army after him. He will turn on us the rage which he excites: my daughter, thou, and myself, will be their victims. Should I fly to Argos, the Greeks will with their united forces ravage my dominions. Such are the misfortunes in which I am involved. Oh Gods, to what have you reduced me! Thou seest, my dear Menelaus, thou seest thy counsels are unreasonable. I have but one favour to intreat of thee: so manage the affair with Clytemnestra, that she may be ignorant of the fatal secret, till I have sacrificed her daughter to the God of Death. This will afford me some small consolation; and be you, oh strangers, inviolably secret.



# INTERLUDE.

## CHORUS.

What fatal ills does guilty love produce! happy, thrice happy <sup>STROPHE.</sup> they, who united by the chaste ties of marriage, are obedient to the laws of the wise Goddess Venus! That love is madness which Cupid kindles in those bosoms wounded by his darts. For this young Deity has two sorts of arrows; one gives to life its softest happiness, the other embitters it with woe. Turn from our bosoms, charming Venus, ah, turn aside those poisoned darts. From thee chaste love and beauty we demand. Oh give us, Goddess, give us to taste thy sweets, and guard us from thy pains!

\* The manners of men are as different as their characters. When <sup>ANTISTROPHE.</sup> good, they are an inestimable treasure: polished by education, they <sup>PHE.</sup> give permanence to virtue. That modesty on which they are founded, has yet another amiable quality: when joined to wisdom, it teaches us to practise those nice decencies which give unfading glory. For is it not glorious to aspire to that virtue by which women preserve inviolate their chastity, and which in men, more varied and diffused, renders cities great and powerful?

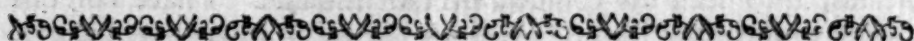
\* This Antistrophe is not the least difficult passage in the whole piece, as all the commentators have perceived: for they say little of it. After having laboured long

upon it, I think I have found the sense. It is a piece of morality; Euripides often moralizes.



EPODE.

Oh Paris, while a shepherd in the fields of Ida, thy native country, thou watch'dst thy tender flock that skipt about thee, and cropt the flowery grafs: while to thy Phrygian flute thou didst sing soft foreign airs, in imitation of the reeds of \* Olympus, the Goddeffes made thee their judge when they contended for the prize of beauty. For thy reward thou camest to Greece; thou sawest Helena; thou didst feel, and thou didst inspire a fatal passion.



## A C T the T H I R D.

## S C E N E the F I R S T. †

## The C H O R U S.

WHAT charms have power and greatness! Behold the princefs Iphigenia! behold her mother, the queen of Agamemnon! Can their illustrious birth, their smiling fortune, be too much admired. Surely the Gods take pleasure in communicating part of their grandeur to weak mortals. Ye women of Chalcis, stay; let us receive the queen, who is preparing to descend from her chariot; let us pay her our respects, and assist her to alight. Let us interrupt our songs, to receive the daughter of Agamemnon; let us not alarm her by any unfortunate presage, or give fear and inquietude to these princeffes, who, like us, are strangers in Aulis.

\* Olympus was an excellent player on the flute, and a pupil of Marsyas, who invented, says the scholiast upon Aristophanes, a new method.

† I thought it necessary to make some little alteration in the distribution of the acts and scenes of this tragedy. It was supposed that the Chorus concluded with this passage the foregoing interlude, and that Clytemnestra begins the third act: but the interruption of their singing, and the manner in which Clytemnestra as she enters answers the compliments

paid by the women of Chalcis, make it evident that these women perceived the queen's chariot at a distance, and began the act by preparing to receive her. When we consider the vast extent of the ancient theatre, we will not be astonished, that a complete equipage and train of a queen were exhibited on it. The ancients took great care to make the theatrical action an exact copy of the real one. Their machines were more varied, and more ingenious than ours.

S C E N E

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, ORESTES,  
the TRAIN.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The manner in which you receive me is a fortunate presage, and the pledge of a happy marriage for my daughter --- Take out of the chariot the presents I design for her, and bear them to the palace. Alight, my Iphigenia: some of you receive her gently in your arms, and lead her: and do thou give me thy hand, and stand before these fiery coursers, lest they should terrify this infant. Here, take my little Orestes \*--sweet babe, thou art asleep, the motion of the chariot has lulled thee---awake, dear innocent, and be witness of thy sister's happy marriage. Great as thou art by birth, thou wilt be greater by being allied to the son of Thetis, a prince equal to the Gods. --- Be near me, daughter, that these strangers, in beholding thee, may call me a happy mother --- and see, thy father comes; let us fly to meet him.

S C E N E the T H I R D.

To them A G A M E M N O N.

IPHIGENIA.

May I be permitted to embrace my father, after so long an absence?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My husband, and my king †! Oh, justly honoured and revered, behold, we are come in obedience to thy orders.

IPHI-

\* There is great simplicity in all this. If when the soft affections of nature durst appear with dignity.  
it shocks our manners, we ought at least to pardon it in an age, wherein persons of the highest rank were not yet ashamed of the names of father, mother, husband, and wife, † It was thus, that the women in ancient times addressed their husbands.

Imitations by RACINE.

IPHIGENIE. Seigneur, où courez-vous, & quels empressemens  
Vous dérobent si-tôt à mes embarrasemens?  
A qui dois-je imputer cette fuite soudaine?  
Mon respect a fait place au transports de la reine.

A a a z

Un



## I P H I G E N I A.

Chide me not, my father, for this presumption; so long an absence gives me a right to thy embraces.

## A G A M E M N O N.

Embrace me, my dearest Iphigenia: I know thy tenderness for thy father; it exceeds that of my other children.

## I P H I G E N I A.

Oh, with what transport do I behold thee, after this tedious absence?

## A G A M E M N O N.

My Iphigenia, my dearest daughter, my transport is not less than thine.

## I P H I G E N I A.

Oh how welcome to me was thy command to attend thee here!

- Un moment à mon tour ne vous puis-je arrêter ?  
Et ma joie à vos yeux n'ose-t-elle éclater ?  
Ne puis-je--
- AGAMEMNON. Hé-bien, ma fille, embrassez votre pere.  
Il vous aime toujours
- IPHIGENIE. Que cette amour m'est chère !  
Quel plaisir de vous voir & de vous contempler  
Dans ce nouvel éclat dont je vous briller ?  
Quels honneurs ! quel pouvoir ! déjà la Renommée  
Par d'étonnans récits m'en avoit informée.  
Mais que voyant de près ce spectacle charmant  
Je sens croître ma joie & mon étonnement !  
Dieux ! avec quel amour la Grèce vous révère !  
Quel bonheur de me voir la fille d'un tel pere !
- AGAMEMNON. Vous méritiez, ma fille, un pere plus heureux.
- IPHIGENIE. Quelle félicité peut manquer à vos vœux ?  
A de plus grands honneurs un Roi peut-il prétendre ?  
J'ai crû n'avoir au Ciel que des graces à rendre.
- AGAMEMNON. Grands Dieux ! à son malheur dois-je la préparer ?
- IPHIGENIE. Vous vous cachez, Seigneur, & semblez soupirer.  
Tous vos regards sur moi ne tombent qu'avec peine.  
Avons-nous sans votre ordre abandonné Mycène ?
- AGAMEMNON. Ma fille, je vous vois toujours des mêmes yeux :  
Mais les tems sont changés aussi-bien que les lieux.  
D'un soin cruel ma joie est ici combattue.
- IPHIGENIE. Hé, mon pere, oubliez votre rang à ma vûe ;  
Je prévois la rigueur d'un long éloignement,  
N'osez-vous sans rougir être pere un moment ?  
N'éclaircirez-vous point ce front chargé d'ennuis ?
- AGAMEMNON. Ah ma fille !
- IPHIGENIE. Seigneur, poursuivez.
- AGAMEMNON. Je ne puis, &c.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas, my child, I know not whether I ought to rejoice at this meeting.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah, why this sudden coldness?

AGAMEMNON.

Impute it to those cares inseparable from the rank I hold, as general and as king.

IPHIGENIA.

Alas, my father, wilt thou not for a moment steal thyself from these cares, and admit my filial love, my duty?

AGAMEMNON.

Am I not with thee, Iphigenia? Oh, my daughter, thou takest up all my thoughts.

IPHIGENIA.

Then lay aside this awful air of majesty, which strikes a terror in thy daughter, and look serenely on me.

AGAMEMNON.

I do, my child; and yet it is but for a moment only, and while I look upon thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Alas, thou weepest, my father; tears, in spite of thy endeavours to restrain them, steal from thine eyes.

AGAMEMNON.

We must part, Iphigenia; a long, long time shall we be separated.

IPHIGENIA.

How, part! I do not understand thee: \* but it is not for me to penetrate into thy secrets.

AGAMEMNON.

How does this early prudence increase my grief!

IPHIGENIA.

Alas, what shall I say to please thee, and allay this grief?

---

\* I have added this line. Agamemnon's answer shews it is the poet's thought.



AGMEMNON. [*Aside*]

Oh, I can hold no longer! (*To her*) Enough, my daughter. Once more I tell thee, I am pleased with thy discretion.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, that thou wouldst quit this Trojan war, and stay in thy own kingdom with thy children.

AGAMEMNON.

Would to the Gods---but no, I cannot enjoy my wishes, and that is my misfortune.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh may these wars have an end, and all the miseries which Menelaus has caused.

AGAMEMNON.

They will ruin others as well as me.

IPHIGENIA.

But what has detained thee so long at Aulis, my father?

AGAMEMNON.

That which still detains the army here.

IPHIGENIA.

\* Where must thou go, then, to meet the Phrygians?

AGAMEMNON.

To a country, where would to heaven Paris had never been born.

IPHIGENIA.

Thou art going, then, to cross the seas, and leave thy daughter.

AGAMEMNON.

No, Iphigenia, thou shalt go with me.

IPHIGENIA.

† Ah, how happy should I think myself, if decency would permit me to embark with thee.

AGA-

---

\* Literally it is, *What country do the Phrygians dwell in?* Iphigenia, one would imagine, must certainly know their country; but she might be ignorant where they were to go to give them battle. The meaning of the text is exactly this, *Where are the Phrygians now?*

† It is necessary here to intreat the reader, once for all, to forget for a moment his own age, and imagine he lives in that of Euripides.

AGAMEMNON.

Ah, what a wish hast thou formed---Yes, my daughter, thou shalt \* pass the waves, depend upon it.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall I embark alone, or the queen with me?

AGAMEMNON.

Alone : neither thy father nor thy mother will be with thee.

IPHIGENIA.

I understand thee ; thou hast destin'd me for a foreign spouse.

AGAMEMNON.

Enquire no more, Iphigenia : thou oughtest in decency to be ignorant of my designs.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, may'st thou soon return victorious from the Trojan war!

AGAMEMNON.

A certain sacrifice must be performed before I can depart.

IPHIGENIA.

The secret of this sacred ceremony is reserved for the priests ; I do not ask what it is.

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt know it, daughter ; thou shalt be there, and perhaps not far from the altar.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall we sing hymns there ?

AGAMEMNON. [*Afide.*]

At least she is happy in her ignorance of my meaning---Oh envied ignorance ! ---Retire, my dear Iphigenia, go and shut thyself

Euripides. I shall not examine whether the ancients judged better than we do, by carrying this reserve and delicacy with regard to women so far ; but it is certain, that ladies were not permitted to appear in camps, nor even to converse with men, for very particular reasons. We shall see in the

sequel how much our poet was restrained by this nice regard to decorum, and what precaution he uses, when he is obliged to depart from it.

\* He means the waves of Styx. This equivocation is more agreeable in the original.

up



up with thy women. Dearly have I purchased the pleasure of beholding thee, since it will be followed by so long and painful a separation. Oh youth and beauty worthy of a better fate! Oh Troy, oh Helen, what misery have you brought upon me! [*Afide*] It is too much --- I am silent: yet spite of me my eyes will flow when I embrace thee --- Farewel; retire, my daughter.

## SCENE the FOURTH.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON.

Pardon these tears, my Clytemnestra; I cannot, without grief, see my daughter depart with Achilles. To her indeed this separation is advantageous; but still a father will feel some emotion when he delivers to a stranger's care, the child whom he has bred up with so much tenderness.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My mind is not subject to such weakness: yet when the time comes that I must part with Iphigenia, my grief perhaps will be no less than thine; but this separation must be submitted to: her age and the common law by which her sex is bound require it. Thou hast named the husband thou designest for her; inform me of his birth and country.

AGAMEMNON.

\* Egina, the daughter of Asopus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What God, or what mortal married her?

AGAMEMNON.

Jupiter himself. He had a son by her called Eacus, king of the isle Oenone †.

\* This genealogical detail was necessary to make Achilles known to the audience. Whatever fault may be found with it, yet certainly it is not less necessary in Euripides than in Homer. Clytemnestra did not know Achilles. And this is not surprising: the wives of the ancients picqued themselves on their ignorance of this kind; they were

not even acquainted with the names of men who were not their husbands.

† Oenone, or Oenopia, an island of the gulph Saronica. These names were successively given it. Eacus calls it Egina, from his mother's name.

*Eacus Eginam genetricis nomine dixit.* Ovid. *Metam.* L. 7.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What posterity did this prince leave?

AGAMEMNON.

Peleus, who espoused the daughter of Nereus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Did the Gods consent to this marriage?

AGAMEMNON.

Jupiter promised her to Peleus, and Nereus consented she should marry him.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where was the nuptial feast celebrated? In the profound abyss of the sea?

AGAMEMNON.

No, upon mount Pelion\*, where Chiron dwelt.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What! in that country which is said to be inhabited by the Centaurs.

AGAMEMNON.

The same; and there the Gods met to celebrate the nuptials.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

† Was Achilles educated by Peleus, or by the Goddess, his mother?

AGAMEMNON.

By Chiron, to whose care his father confided him, for fear that his commerce with wicked men should corrupt his manners.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The wisdom of Chiron who educated him is to be admired, but that of Peleus still more, who was capable of chusing such a governor.

AGAMEMNON.

Such is the husband whom I have destined for thy daughter.

\* A mountain between the gulph Pelagicus and the Egean sea.

† The ancients were as solicitous about

the educations as the birth of those with whom they contracted an alliance.



CLYTEMNESTRA.

And he is worthy of her. But in what part of Greece are his dominions?

AGAMEMNON.

They are situated near the river Apidanus, on the confines of Phthia\*.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And will he carry Iphigenia so far from us?

AGAMEMNON.

That depends entirely upon him.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well, may they be happy with each other. I consent to this marriage: but when shall it be celebrated?

AGAMEMNON.

When the luminary of the night has filled its whole circle †.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast thou sacrificed the usual victims to the Goddesses who presides over marriage?

AGAMEMNON.

This shall be my care; it wholly engrosses me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will thou not afterwards give the nuptial banquet?

AGAMEMNON.

I will, when I have offered to the Gods the victims I owe them.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where must the feast be prepared for the ladies?

AGAMEMNON.

Here, near the ships.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis well ‡; if thou dost consent to it I will---

\* Phthia, the capital of Phthiotide in Thessaly, between the gulph Pelasgicus and gulph Maliacus.

† At the full moon.

‡ The Greek is συνίπτασι δ' ἑμῶν: Cante-rus translates it *confer tamen aliquid*. But what does this mean? I have followed Bro-deau, who with more judgment translates it, *conscientias modo*; and I have added some-

thing to Clytemnestra's speech, in which she is interrupted, the better to prepare the reader for what Agamemnon is going to say. This appeared to me to be the most natural: and the liberty I sometimes use of introducing these interrupted speeches, by which the sense is suspended, is certainly justified by the text itself.

AGAMEMNON.

Clytemnestra, I must intreat thee not to refuse me one thing.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What is it? my compliance \* with thy will thou well knowest.

AGAMEMNON.

† It is my part to transact this affair with Achilles; but thou--

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How! shall I not perform the office of a mother upon this occasion?

AGAMEMNON.

The nuptials will be celebrated in the presence of the army; it is not proper for women to appear publicly.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where then would'st thou have the mother of Iphigenia be?

AGAMEMNON.

At Argos: return, and live retired with thy daughters.

\* I would not venture to translate *obedience*. The term would appear too strong, and perhaps shocking in our age.

Imitations by RACINE

AGAMEMNON.

† Vous voyez en quels lieux vous l'avez amenée;

Tout y ressent la guerre & non l'hyménée,

Le tumulte d'un camp, soldats, & matelots,

Un autel hérissé de dards, de javelots,

Tout ce spectacle enfin, pompe digne d'Achille,

Pour attirer vos yeux n'est point assez tranquille,

Et les Grecs y verroient l'épouse de leur roi

Dans un état indigne & de vous & de moi.

M'en croirez-vous? laissez de vos femmes suivie

A cet hymen sans vous marcher Iphigénie.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Qui moi? que remettant ma fille en d'autres bras

Ce que j'ai commencé je ne l'achève pas?

Qu'après l'avoir d'Argos emmenée en Aulide.

Je refuse à l'autel de lui servir de guide?

Dois-je donc de Calchas être moins près que vous?

Et qui présentera ma fille à son époux?

Quelle autre ordonnera cette pompe sacrée.--

AGAMEMNON.

J'avois plus espéré de votre complaisance,

Mais puisque la raison ne vous peut émouvoir,

Puisque enfin ma prière a si peu de pouvoir,

Vous avez entendu ce que je vous demande;

Madame, je le veux, & je vous le commande,

Obezsez.

B b b 2

CLY-



CLYTEMNESTRA.

What! shall I return to Argos, and abandon my daughter? who will then bear the nuptial torch?

AGAMEMNON.

Myself.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou! Decency will not permit it, and this thou knowest.

AGAMEMNON.

Nor will decency permit that thou shouldst appear in the midst of an army.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It requires that a mother should present her daughter to her husband.

AGAMEMNON.

It requires thee to return to Argos, that thy daughters may be no longer deprived of thy care.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A reasonable motive for my departure indeed! Are they not shut up in the palace?

AGAMEMNON.

Clytemnestra, this is too much; return to Argos: I will be obeyed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No, prince, I will not return; I swear by the Goddesses of Argos\*, I will not. The cares of a father be thine; it is my part to perform the duty of a mother. Farewel.

## SCENE the SIXTH.

AGAMEMNON alone.

Alas, how vainly did I hope to separate a mother from her child! She has eluded all my arts. Must I then be reduced to the sad necessity of inventing a thousand falsehoods to deceive those who are dearest to me, and still without success—I will seek Calchas, and confer with him upon the means of removing the calamities of the

---

\* Juno.

Greeks, and of satisfying Diana. I am now doubly unhappy ----  
 \* A wife man should either chuse a wife whom he can govern, or have none.

\*\*\*\*\*

INTRODUCTION

The CHORUS.

'Tis done; the Grecian army shall behold the waves of Simois: our thousand ships shall sail to Ilion; and Troy, tho' built by hands divine, shall fall beneath our force. Troy, that proud city, where Cassandra appears with hair dishevelled, and a laurel crown, and suffers all the fury of the inspiring God.

And now, methinks, I see the Trojans crowding upon their walls: pale fears possess them at the sight of Mars, with all his dreadful equipage of war. The God conducts our fleet to Simois, to force from Priam the sister of the twin Deities; and bring her back to Greece amidst the shields and javelins of her victorious countrymen.

We see the troops rush furious to the fight: they surround Pergamus and her lofty towers; the wretched inhabitants yield up their lives to the devouring sword. Alas, what tears will then be shed in Troy! how will the wife of Priam mourn! The haughty Helen will in vain regret the husband she betrayed. Guard us, ye Gods, guard us and our posterity from misfortunes † such as these. Long will they afford a melancholy theme for the luxurious Lydian dames and Phrygian widows to discourse on. "Alas, will they say, as they sit working at the various loom, why do we not tear our hair, and strike our groaning bosoms? our country falls, our bleeding country dies; and ah, for whom? For thee, inhuman Helen, thou, who, if the poets may be credited, art the daughter of Jupiter and of Leda."

\* The maxim is a little harsh; but it is a Greek's, and that Greek Euripides.

† The Greek word is *dark*. It signifies here accident, misfortune; or, at least, fear, as in Latin.



## ACT the FOURTH.

## SCENE the FIRST.

ACHILLES alone.

WHERE is the general of the Greeks? Is there no one here to inform Agamemnon, that the son of Peleus waits him--- Assembled here upon the shore of Euripus, we are unfortunately detained from sailing. Each of us has his separate interests. Some not yet bound by the soft ties of Hymen have abandoned their country and their fathers: others have quitted their wives and children: so strong is the general passion for subverting Troy, for which all Greece unites in Aulis; sure it is the Gods who have inspired it. But I can no longer defer speaking to Agamemnon of what concerns myself. I did not leave Pharfalia \*, and Peleus my father, to be idly detained at Aulis; unfavourable winds the weak pretence --- Scarce can I restrain my impatient Thessalians, who incessantly press me to depart. "What do we wait for, Achilles, they cry?" "What time is fixed for our departure? What thou resolvest to do, do quickly, or else lead thy troops back to Thessaly, and be no longer imposed upon by the affected delays of the Atrides."

## SCENE the SECOND.

ACHILLES, CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Noble son of Thetis, thy voice has reached me in the palace, and brought me here to meet thee.

ACHILLES.

† Oh holy laws of modesty! what do I see! a woman of such exquisite beauty here!

\* A city of Thessaly, at a small distance from Larissa. It was afterwards made famous by the defeat of Pompey.

† I must again intreat the reader will make some allowance for an age so scrupulous as that of Euripides. We, whose notions concerning decorums of this kind are much freer, will doubtless be shocked at this scene. Achilles carries his delicacy so far, as to be astonished at the sight of a woman in Aulis, where the army was assembled. He dares not even enter into conversation with her, nor accept the usual pledge given by the mother of the intended bride: this ceremony consisted in presenting her hand to the chosen spouse. Such was the extreme circumspection and reserve of the ancient times.

CLY-

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It is not surprising that Achilles, who never saw me before, should not know me: and I am pleased to find him so solicitous for the honour of my sex.

ACHILLES.

But may I enquire thy name? and what has brought thee to a place where none but soldiers are to be seen?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To remove thy doubts concerning my arrival in Aulis, know, that I am Clytemnestra, the daughter of Leda, and wife of Agamemnon.

ACHILLES.

Pardon me, princess, if the respect I bear thee obliges me to retire; thou knowest I am not permitted to converse with thee here.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why art thou obliged to avoid me? Behold, I offer thee my hand as a pledge of that happy marriage we are preparing to celebrate.

ACHILLES.

How, princess! I have too much respect for Agamemnon thy husband--

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What dost thou mean, Achilles? Is not this ceremony and this pledge authorized by custom, since thou art to marry my daughter?

ACHILLES.

Thou speakest of marriage---certainly I have great reason to be surpris'd; surely it is through some mistake that thou art pleas'd to favour me thus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I can excuse thy surprise, prince: nature inspires every one with some distrust of friends whom they are not habituated to, especially when marriage is the subject of their discourse.

ACHILLES.

But, princess, once more I must repeat, I do not comprehend thee: I have not solicited the honour of an alliance with the Atreides, nor have they explained themselves to me, if ever they had such an intention.



## CLYTEMNESTRA.

What mystery is this? If thou art astonished at my words, I am no less amazed at thine.

## ACHILLES.

I leave thee to judge, which of us is mistaken; for since we do not design to deceive each other, either thou or I must be in an error.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

What indignity is this? Was I imposed upon, then, and my consent solicited to a chimerical marriage?—Confusion!

## ACHILLES.

Without doubt we are both imposed upon: but let not this poor jest afflict thee; despise it.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

I leave thee, prince; it is not possible for me to support thy presence after an affront which fills me with shame and confusion.

## ACHILLES.

I have more reason to resent this affront. I will go seek thy husband in the palace.

## SCENE the THIRD.

To them, the OLD MAN at the palace-gate.

## OLD MAN.

\* Stay, illustrious branch of Eacus, great-son of Thetis, stay; I have many things to say to thee, and to thee also, my queen.

## ACHILLES.

Who art thou?

## OLD MAN.

A slave: this humble title permits me not to be insolent.

## ACHILLES.

To whom dost thou belong? Not to me, that is certain. Agamemnon and I possess nothing in common.

\* The earnest manner in which Achilles is intreated to stay by this confident, who is going to reveal his master's secret, has an admirable effect, and prepares Clytemnestra for the belief of a circumstance, which would otherwise have appeared incredible.

OLD MAN.

I belong to Agamemnon, to whom Tyndarus gave me.

ACHILLES.

What is thy business with me, friend?

OLD MAN.

Art thou alone? Is there no person near us?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Come forward, and speak freely; we are alone.

OLD MAN.

Oh fortune, be propitious, and preserve those for whom at present I employ all my cares!

ACHILLES.

What will this end in? Sure he has some important reason for speaking thus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak, I conjure thee; keep me no longer in suspense.

OLD MAN.

My queen, thou knowest how faithfully I am devoted to thee and thy children.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I know thy zeal, thy duty and affection: thou hast been long attached to me.

OLD MAN.

Thou dost remember, that Agamemnon received me as a slave who belonged to thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well do I remember it: I brought thee with me to Argos, and thou hast always served me faithfully.

OLD MAN.

It is just, then, that my fidelity to thy husband should be less binding than that I owe to thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It is, therefore quickly explain to me the mystery which lies concealed under thy words.



OLD MAN.

Ah, Clytemnestra, thy daughter is to die---and by her father's hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What do I hear! Oh horror! What hast thou said, wretch?

OLD MAN.

Alas, unhappy princess, the fatal knife hangs over her innocent head.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh miserable mother! (*Aside*) Is Agamemnon mad then?

OLD MAN.

Yes, when Iphigenia is in question, then he is no longer able to hear reason.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By what black demon is he possessed?

OLD MAN.

He obeys a counterfeited oracle delivered by Calchas, which imports, that a happy voyage can only be purchased with the blood of Iphigenia.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A happy voyage! to what place? Oh wretched mother! miserable daughter! thy father will be thy murderer then! (*Aside.*)

OLD MAN.

To Troy, to recover Helen:

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How! must the return of Helen be purchased with the blood of Iphigenia?

OLD MAN.

Agamemnon must sacrifice her to Diana. Now, princess, thou knowest the whole shocking mystery.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This marriage, then, was a pretence to bring me from Argos.

OLD MAN.

It was, that thou mightest be persuaded thou gavest her to Achilles.

CLY-

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, and have I conducted thee to death, my child?

OLD MAN.

This misery, this destruction, thou owest to the cruelty of Agamemnon.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I am lost: I can no longer restrain my gushing tears.

OLD MAN.

Alas, how weak a resource is tears in calamities like thine!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But from whom hadst thou this information?

OLD MAN.

I was ordered to bear a second letter to thee---

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What was its purport? to exhort me to bring my daughter to the death that was prepared for her, or to prevent this fatal journey?

OLD MAN.

To prevent it. The king again remembered he was a father.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, wretch, why didst thou not deliver this letter to me?

OLD MAN.

Menelaus forced it from me. He is the cause of all thy woes\*.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh son of Peleus, oh, Goddess-born, thou hearest this, and thou art silent!

ACHILLES.

Yes, princess, I have heard all; I am afflicted for thy part in this affair; for that they have given me justly enraged.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My daughter, under pretence of being married to thee, is brought hither to be murdered!

\* Here the old man withdraws.



## ACHILLES.

Agamemnon has used me basely.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

\* Alas, Achilles, behold me at thy feet : a mortal, as I am, need not blush to supplicate the son of a Divinity. Suffer me, suffer me to kneel : I am a mother, and I am pleading for a child. Oh let these tender titles move thee. She is thy bride. Alas ! she was to have been thy bride : so did I vainly flatter myself. For thee I brought her hither : for thee I placed the flowery wreath upon her head. Oh wretched Clytemnestra ! I crowned the innocent victim, and led her not to marriage, but to slaughter. And can Achilles then refuse to succour her ? Alas, prince, thou art not indeed the husband of my unhappy daughter, but thou hast been called so. Oh, by this hand which I now touch, by the soft name of mother---(alas, I dare not conjure thee by thy own name, which has undone me) do not abandon us : thou art the only asylum we have here, our friend, the Deity whom I implore. How is it possible for a poor weak woman to oppose a barbarous monarch, and an obstinate and savage † army ? Oh let my despair be my excuse for this harsh term. I am not ignorant of its valour. Dare to assist us, prince, and we shall be secure : but oh, if thou dost abandon us, my daughter dies, and I shall be for ever wretched!

## Imitations by RACINE.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

\* Oubliez une gloire importune :  
Ce triste abaissement convient à ma fortune.  
Heureuse si mes pleurs vous peuvent attendre,  
Une mère à vos pieds peut tomber sans rougir.  
C'est votre épouse, hélas ! qui vous est enlevée :  
Dans cet heureux espoir je l'avoir élevée.  
C'est vous que nous cherchions sur ce funeste bord,  
Et votre nom, Seigneur, l'a conduite à la mort.  
Ira-t-elle des Dieux implorant la justice,  
Embrasser les Autels parés pour son supplice ?  
Elle n'a que vous seul. Vous êtes en ces lieux,  
Son père, son époux, son asyle, ses Dieux, &c. A& III. Sc. V.

† Clytemnestra calls the Grecian army obstinate and savage. She adds, *χρησμός* *d'bras fidèles*, however useful it may be, doubtless, because she is afraid of offending the warlike Achilles, by speaking disrespectfully of the army; otherwise this insipid palliation would spoil an excellent speech, and I hope I shall be pardoned for having rather rendered the thought than the expression : *traditores traditores*, says the Italian proverb. I am afraid that I have been but too faithful a translator at the expence of the original, and my own version likewise.

CHORUS.

Oh nature, how strong thy feelings in a mother's heart! Unhappy queen, to what extremities is she reduced!

ACHILLES.

I will do all that thou requirest, princess, and more; prosperity has not rendered me insensible to the afflictions of others.

CHORUS.

Such is the character of the hero and the sage: prudence directs their actions.

ACHILLES.

\* There are conjunctures when moderation is unseasonable; there are others, when even its excess is safe. I have learned frankness and sincerity from the wise lessons of Chiron, my revered preceptor. The Atrides have always found me as ready to obey their just commands, as to oppose them when they were inconsistent with my honour. I love my liberty, and will carry to Troy a heart as free and independent as it is in Aulis. Queen, thou may'st securely rely upon my aid; thou shalt not suffer this cruel outrage from a husband. Expect from me all that thou oughtest to expect from a prince, who, though young, is deeply affected with thy misfortunes, and interested to free thee from them. No, Clytemnestra, thy daughter shall not die; the barbarous Agamemnon shall not lay his bloody hands upon a princess who was destined for my wife. The unnatural father shall no longer veil his treachery under the sanction of my name --- Oh Gods! shall the name of Achilles be fatal to Iphigenia? Alas, shall I point the murdering knife at her helpless bosom? Her father is her assassin;

Imitations by RACINE.

ACHILLE à IPHIGENIE.

\* Madame, je me tais & demeure immobile.

Est-ce à moi que l'on parle, & connoit-on Achille.

Une mere pour vous croit devoir me prier:

Une reine à mes pieds se vient humilier.

Et me deshonorant par d'injustes allarmes

Pour attendrir mon cœur on a recours aux larmes.

Qui doit prendre à vos jours plus d'intérêt que moi?

Ah! sans doute, on s'en peut reposer sur ma foi.

L'outrage me regarde, & quoi qu'on entreprenne,

Je réponds d'une vie où j'attache la mienne.

Mais ma juste douleur va plus loins m'engager.

C'est peu de vous défendre, & je cours vous venger.

Et punir à la fois le cruel stratagème,

Qui s'ose de mon nom armer contre vous-même, &c.

ACT III. Sc. VI.

II

but.



But never can I persuade myself that I am innocent of her death, if I suffer her to be sacrificed under the pretence of her marriage to me. Oh, I should be the basest of the Greeks; the infamy of Menelaus would be less than mine: I should be unworthy to be called the son of Thetis, if I became the minister of Agamemnon's cruelty. Be comforted, Clytemnestra. Sypile\*, from whence the Atridae drew their origin, shall live eternally in the memory of mankind, and the country where Achilles was born shall fall into oblivion, ere thy husband shall lay his sacrilegious hands upon thy daughter. I swear by Nereus, the God who lives beneath the ocean, by him, by the illustrious father of the Goddess who gave me birth, I swear, that Calchas shall lay aside his preparations for this inhuman sacrifice. What have we to do with these presumptuous diviners, this priestly race? Imposture is their trade; they speak by chance, and oftener speak lies than truth, whose whole science is governed by events. Do not imagine that the soft tie with which thou didst flatter me, is my only motive for engaging thus warmly in the defence of Iphigenia; the injury I have suffered from Agamemnon is alone sufficient to animate me on this occasion. Has he not authorized me to love the princess? If I am so happy as to obtain her from thy hand, shall not Agamemnon dread the resentment of a lover and a husband? If it was necessary that so dear a victim should be delivered to the Greeks; if the interest of Greece demanded it, † Achilles would be capable of sacrificing his love to the public good. But though I am now neglected by the Atridae, I will make them sensible, that, as a friend or foe, Achilles is not to be contemned. This sword, which shall taste of blood before I plunge it into Trojan bosoms, this sword shall punish the insolence of those who dare to force thy daughter from me---Be easy, princess; thou hast implored the assistance of Achilles, as of a God: I am ‡ not a God; but I would become one to serve thee.

\* **Sypile** was a city of Lydia where Tantalus dwelt, who was the father of Niobe, from whom Agamemnon and Menelaus were descended. The comparison of Sypile with the country where Achilles was born, I owe to Barnes' interpretation. The other commentators have not taken the sense of this passage.

† This certainly is not very gallant, but Achilles is neither a French nor a Roman hero. His character is more fierce and

haughty than tender. See the parallel between the Greek and French Iphigenia, towards the end.

† Canterus and other commentators have translated this passage thus, *ὅλα θεός ὑποσέομαι*, *I am not a God, but perhaps I may become one*. This is shocking. Euripides would not be guilty of such an absurdity. He means *εἰ*, *I would become one for thee*. The reader will judge whether I am to be condemned for giving it this term.

# IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

383

## CHORUS.

Oh Achilles, these generous sentiments are worthy of thee, and of the Goddess who gave thee birth!

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

What shall I say, prince? Such generosity claims all the praise that gratitude can pay: but still I fear to displease thee; for well I know, that heroes like Achilles love not to hear their own praise. Alas, ought I not to blush, that I can only thank thee with my tears; that talk to thee on no other subject but my grief, which cannot be felt I can by thee---Ah, what does my distraction say? Thou who hast had the goodness to console me, to offer me thy aid in this distress, must needs be affected by it. Continue then thy pity to an unhappy mother: alas, I flattered myself that I should call Achilles son. Vain hope! fate would not grant me such a blessing; and this is my first misfortune. But can there be a more unfortunate presage for thy marriage than the murder of thy destined bride? In this calamity thou, as well as I, art interested---Yet why should I importune thee thus? Thou hast already declared that my daughter's fate depends on thee---Say, prince, shall this unhappy daughter fall prostrate at thy feet to thank thee for this goodness? I know, that by the strict laws of decency, she ought not to appear before thee---yet if thou dost wish to see her, myself will lead the blushing virgin hither: but if thou wilt dispense with her appearance, grant to the mother's tears what from her innocence and youth might be obtained.

## ACHILLES.

No, Clytemnestra, let the princess remain in her apartment; I would not wound her modesty.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yet it is just that she should come, and thank her great deliverer.

## ACHILLES.

Permit me to repeat, that I will not wound the modesty of the princess, by desiring to see her: we must take care not to deserve the reproach of imprudence, nor afford a subject for the censures of a numerous army. I have already told thee, that without this useless step, my ardor to serve thee will be no less. If Iphigenia can no otherwise be preserved but by fighting for her, my resolution is

already



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already taken; rely securely on me, Clytemnestra, I will restore thy daughter to thee \*, or perish in the attempt.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, may'st thou live, prince; live, and be ever happy.

ACHILLES.

But that we may the better succeed in our design, permit me, oh queen, to offer thee my advice.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak, I will be wholly governed by it.

ACHILLES.

Let us first endeavour to make Agamemnon resume the sentiments of a father.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, the attempt will be fruitless; he fears the army.

ACHILLES.

Whatever his arguments are, we may oppose them with others.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, I have no hope that I shall prevail upon him; but I will obey thee.

ACHILLES.

† Go, princess, prostrate thyself at his feet, conjure him not to proceed in this inhuman sacrifice; if he is deaf to thy prayers, return to me: but if thou prevail'st, thou wilt have no more occasion for my assistance; Iphigenia will be delivered, I shall no longer be an enemy to Agamemnon, and be less blamed by the Greeks, for having had recourse to gentle methods rather than to arms,

\* The text adds, *but if I preserve her, I* would not be endured by the French. The *shall not perish*. This lengthening of the Greek writers always abounded in such sort of thought, which is pleasing in the Greek, of alternatives.

Imitations by RACINE.

ACHILLE à CLYTEMNESTRA & IPHIGENIE.

† Enfin vous le voulez. Il faut donc vous complaire:  
Donnez-lui l'une & l'autre un conseil salutaire:  
Rappelez sa raison, persuadez-le bien  
Pour vous, pour mon repos, & sur-tout pour le sien.  
Je perds trop de momens en des discours frivoles:  
Il faut des actions & non pas des paroles.

Act III. Sc. VII.

thou

thou wilt enjoy the satisfaction of preserving thy daughter, without incurring the resentment of thy husband, and without needing my aid.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

\* Wisdom speaks in thy words: I will do as thou hast directed. But if I should not succeed, where shall I see Achilles again, where find that arm, that firm support in my misfortunes?

ACHILLES.

I will not go far from hence, princess. I will appear when my presence is necessary, and spare thee the confusion of shewing thy tears and thy distress to a whole army. Sacred from public view should be the sorrow of a queen, the daughter of the great Tyn-darus, a name so honoured by the Greeks.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Prince, I will obey thee. Oh, if there be Gods, who love and who reward the just (and if there are not, what will become of labouring virtue?) may they shower their choicest blessings up on thee!



INTERLUDE.

CHORUS.

† Ah, hapless Iphigenia, how little do thy fatal nuptials resemble those of Thetis! Gods, with what lustre did Hymen then appear to grace the immortal bride! Hymen so often sung upon the Lybian flute, the sweetly-breathing reed, and the soft lute, which regulates the mazy dance. How ravishing the mingled melody, when the fair-haired Pierides met on mount Pelion to celebrate the marriage, and adorned with golden buskins, struck with light feet the ground, and graceful moved to the soft varying

Imitations by RACINE.

- \* Seigneur, daignez m'attendre, & ne la point quitter:  
A mon perfide époux, je cours me présenter,  
Il ne soutiendra point la fureur qui m'anime;  
Il faudra que Calchas cherche une autre victime.

AG III. Sc. V.

† This addition arises from the subject. It is the ground of the whole Chorus.



notes ! The soul of harmony breathed in their charming song: their song to Peleus and Thetis raised. The forest of Pelion, and the mountains of the Centaurs, were the scenes of these rejoicings. The blooming Ganymede, beloved by Jove, poured the delicious nectar into cups of gold, while the fifty daughters of Nereus danced round the happy pair.

ANTISTRO-  
PHE.

Thither run the Centaurs crowned with rushes, and bearing their wooden bows and arrows in their hands. In crowds they ran to partake the feast of the Divinities, and share the joys of Bacchus. The virgins of Thessalia sung hymns in honour of the Goddess Thetis; and Apollo, to whom all futurity is open, and Chiron, who knew the origin of the Muses, promised an Achilles to the happy pair; Achilles, who, they said, should one day enter the fields of Troy, and with his Myrmidons subvert great Priam's kingdom: that the young hero should appear there in celestial armour, wrought by the hands of Vulcan, the gift of his immortal mother \*. The Gods themselves sung the praises of the bride and bridegroom.

EPODE.

But thou, unhappy Iphigenia, art crowned with flowers by the inhuman Greeks; with fillets they bind thy beauteous brow, they plunge the sacred knife in thy fair bosom. Alas, thy fate resembles that of a young tender heifer which had left its cave, and wandered o'er the mountains where it fed, delighted with the sound of rural music. Thus wert thou, fair unhappy princess, brought up in the bosom of an indulgent mother, who destined thee for a happy bride. Ah, what can now preserve thee, the graces of thy blooming youth and beauty, or the more awful charms of virtue? Alas, in this degenerate age, impiety raises her head, and triumphs, while virtue, neglected virtue, is trampled under foot. Oh mortals, learn to fear the powerful vengeance of the Gods.

\* Barnes gives another sense to this phrase. The Greek *ἡμέται* signifies, according to him, that the Gods celebrated the nuptials of Thetis, as being the chief of the Nereids, and the hymeneals of Peleus. The sense I have

given it is more delicate and natural. Thetis was a goddess, Peleus a mortal: therefore it seems reasonable, that the praises of the bride should precede those of the bridegroom.

## A C T the F I F T H.

## S C E N E the F I R S T.

## C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

**A**LAS, in vain have I in the palace sought my barbarous husband; in vain do I seek him here: he flies me, he shuns my presence\*. Mean time, my wretched daughter, e'er since she knew the doom her father has passed on her, abandons herself to tears and groans. Ha! he comes; this cruel, this unnatural father, who would plunge a poniard into the bosoms of his children.

## S C E N E the S E C O N D.

## C L Y T E M N E S T R A, A G A M E M N O N.

## A G A M E M N O N.

Clytemnestra, I am glad I have met thee alone: I have many things to say to thee, which thy daughter ought not to hear.

## C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

Well, what is this new mystery?

## A G A M E M N O N.

† Send Iphigenia alone with me to the altar. All is ready; the lustral water, the cakes for immolation, the sacred fire in which they are to be thrown, and the victims, whose blood is to be shed in honour of Diana, before the nuptials of Iphigenia are performed.

## C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

‡ Thou speakest well, but thy designs, Agamemnon, what shall

## Imitations by RACINE.

C L Y T E M N E S T R E  
à A C C H I L L E.

\* Tout est perdu, Seigneur, si vous ne nous sauvez:  
Agamemnon m'évite, & craignant mon visage,  
Il me fait de l'autel refuser le passage, &c. A& III. Sc. VII.

A G A M E M N O N.

† Calchas est prêt, Madame, & l'autel est paré:  
J'ai fait ce que m'ordonne un devoir légitime. A& VI. Sc. III.

C L Y T E M N E S T R E.

‡ Venez, venez, ma fille; on n'attend plus que vous.  
Venez, remercier un pere qui vous aime,  
Et qui veut à l'autel vous conduire lui même.



shall I call them?---Appear, my daughter, thy father waits thee: thou knowest already what his tenderness has resolved on. Come, Iphigenia, and bring with thee under thy veil thy infant brother--See, she is here: hear her, and then hear me.

## S C E N E the T H I R D.

IPHIGENIA, CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, the CHORUS.

AGAMEMNON.

My daughter---ha! what mean these tears? why dost thou look thus movingly upon me? and now thou bendest thy eyes to earth, and hidest them with thy veil.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh heaven! where shall I begin the sad enumeration of my miseries? the past\*, the present, and the future, overwhelm me, and confound my labouring thought!

AGAMEMNON.

What means this grief and this confusion? Have they agreed together to alarm me? Terror and amazement have possessed the mother and the daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Agamemnon, now answer, but answer truly to the question I shall ask thee.

AGAMEMNON.

Speak, I will answer as I ought.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast thou then, inhuman father, hast thou resolved to murder thy child and mine?

AGAMEMNON.

Que vois je? quel discours! ma fille vous pleurez,

Et baïffez devant moi vos yeux mal assurés.

Quel trouble! mais tout pleure, & la fille & la mere.

Ah, malheureux, Arcas, tu m'as trahi.

Ibid. Sc. IV.

\* See the Greek, ἀραὶ γὰρ πρῶτοι χροῦσθαι, πρῶτοι ὑπὸ τοῖς πόσι πανταχῶ. The meaning of this passage, according to all the interpreters of it, is, for in every discourse there should be a beginning, a middle, and an end. But it is not in this manner that grief expresses itself. Is it not more reason-

able to believe that Iphigenia would say, I know not where to begin the recital of my misfortunes, if I must repeat them all, the first, the last, and all the others; that is, the past, the present, and the future; and this is the turn I have chosen to give it.

A G A-

AGAMEMNON.

Oh Gods! what horrid words are these! What a suspicion, Clytemnestra, hast thou entertained!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Once more, oh Agamemnon, I repeat it, answer me this question.

AGAMEMNON.

Put not such strange questions to me, and I will answer thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This is my question, seek not to evade it.

AGAMEMNON.

Oh fortune, oh destiny, oh thou black demon, the author of my woes!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, this demon has undone us all.

AGAMEMNON.

Clytemnestra, of whom dost thou complain?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, thou barbarian, and darest thou ask this? thy artifice destroys itself.

AGAMEMNON. [*Aside.*]

Oh heaven, I am betrayed!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

\* Why this dissimulation? I know all the horrid mystery: thy sighs, thy tears, even thy silence, shews thy treacherous designs.

AGAMEMNON [*Aside.*]

I must be silent: for oh, it is too much to add imposture to my other miseries.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hear me, Agamemnon, for I will speak without disguise; my meaning shall not be wrapt up in riddles--Oh, what a husband have I found in thee, thou cruel one! a ravisher, who forced me to his

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Imitations by RACINE.

CLYTEMNESTRA. \* Pourquoi feindre à nos yeux une fausse tristesse, &c. Act IV. Sc. IV.

bed,



bed, after he had murdered \* Tantalus, my first husband, and from my bosom snatched my infant son, and gave him death before my eyes. My brothers, Castor and Pollux, to revenge me, took up arms : then thou hadst recourse to Tyndarus, fell at his feet, and meanly implored his mercy. The good old man shielded thee from my vengeance ; I was persuaded to pardon what was past, and to receive thee for my husband. How irreproachable my conduct † since has been, thou wert thyself a witness. Thou didst increase in wealth and power ; abroad revered, happy at home ; and to crown all, I brought thee three lovely daughters, and this dear infant : and now how am I rewarded for these blessings ? Thou robb'st me of my daughter. Say then, inhuman, if I should ask thee, why thou would'st sacrifice her, what answer would'st thou make ? But thou art silent. I will answer for thee, then. My daughter is to be sacrificed that Menelaus may recover Helen ‡. Oh heaven ! and must we shed the innocent blood of our children, for an ungrateful woman, who has abandoned her lord ! Must we purchase what we hate the most with the death of those who are dearest to us ? Ah, cruel Agamemnon, if the Trojan war forces thee to leave me, how shall I support my miserable solitude without my daughter ? What sentiments shall I entertain of thee, when I in vain ask for my Iphigenia ; when wild with grief I seek for her among her sisters, and hopeless ever to behold her more, I wring my wretched hands, and oh, my child, I cry, my dearest Iphigenia, thou art dead ! thy father murdered thee ! Such is his

\* Homer says that this princess was first married to Agamemnon. Euripides supposes that she had a former husband, whose name was Tantalus. Eustatheus upon his second book of the Iliad. Barnes adds, and with reason, that this is not the Tantalus, who was the father to Pelops, and grandfather of Agamemnon. No certainly ; for he was the son of Thyestes.

† Clytemnestra had no reason to boast thus afterwards of her conjugal fidelity ; and her reproaches shew, that she repented perhaps already : her amour with Egistheus, and the murder of Agamemnon revenged those crimes with which she reproaches this unfortunate husband.

Imitations by RACINE.

CLYTEMNESTRE. † Si du crime d'Hélène on punit sa famille,  
Faites chercher à Sparte Hermione sa fille.  
Laissez à Ménélas racheter d'un tel prix  
Sa coupable moitié dont il est trop épris.  
Mais vous, quelles fureurs vous rendent sa victime ?  
Pourquoi vous imputer la peine de son crime ;  
Pourqui moi-même enfin me déchirant le flanc  
Payer sa folle amour du plus pur de mon sang ?

Act IV. Sc. IV.

tenderness for his family, and such the fatal example he has left them. For oh, barbarian, what ought to hinder my daughter and myself from punishing thee by a death as cruel as that thou hast prepared for us?--Alas, what have I said? Do not, Agamemnon, ah, do not drive to despair a wretched mother! oh, force her not to hate thee!--But shouldst thou sacrifice thy child, what prayers wilt thou offer to the Gods with such a victim? What blessing wilt thou implore of them, while thou art murdering thy child? A safe return to Argos? a return as fatal as thy departure would be shameful, sure! Can I wish, can I implore this for thee? What notion should I have of the justice of the Gods, if I implored their favour for a parricide? But suppose it is granted, how shall we welcome thee when thou dost return to Argos? Wilt thou embrace thy children? Oh, Agamemnon, this tender consolation is lost to thee for ever. Which of them will venture to approach a father who coolly massacres them?---Thou answerest not. Ah, sure this silence is a proof my reasons are convincing. Hear me then a moment longer. \* Are no other titles pleasing in thy ears, but those of general and of king? Hast thou forgot thou art a father also? If thou hast not, speak to the Greeks like one. Why dost thou not say to them, "Oh Greeks, you wish with ardor to sail to Troy. Well, I consent to it; but let the lot decide which of us shall sacrifice his child to purchase favourable winds"---Is not the interest common? common then the danger ought to be. Art thou the only one who must give Greece a victim? Is it not more reasonable, that Menelaus should sacrifice Hermione in her mother's cause? Shall my virtue, my tenderness, and fidelity, be rewarded by my daughter's death, while the guilty Helen, more fortunate than I, returns with her's triumphant and adored to Sparta? If my arguments are weak, it is easy to answer them; but if thou feelest their force, oh, be again my husband, restore me my Iphigenia, restore her to thyself.

Imitations by RACINE.

CLYTEMNESTRE. \* Mais non : l'amour d'un frere, & son honneur blessé  
Sont les moindres des soins dont vous êtes pressé.  
Cette soif de regner que rien ne peut éteindre,  
L'orgueil de voir vingt rois vous servir & vous craindre,  
Tous le droits de l'empire en vos mains confiés,  
Cruel, c'est à ces Dieux que vous sacrifiez, &c. A& IV. Sc. IV.

C H O-



## CHORUS.

Oh Agamemnon, suffer thyself to be moved; nature requires thee to spare thy children's blood: parental tenderness may be owned by all mankind.

## IPHIGENIA.

\* Oh, my father, if I possessed the eloquence of Orpheus, were mine the art of giving sensibility to rocks and stones, if the power of softening hearts were mine, all would I now employ to move a father's pity! Alas, my only eloquence is tears---I weep; it is all I can do. Thus suppliant at thy feet, my only plea for mercy is the title of thy daughter. Oh take not from me that life I have received from thee, while yet life has its charms, and force me not, ere fate and nature summon me to see the gloomy regions of the dead. † I was the first who called thee by the soft name of father, and whom thou honouredst with the tender name of child: 'twas I whom first thou receivedst into thy fond arms, and who was long the only object of a father's tenderness. Alas, thou usedst then to say to me: Oh my daughter, shall I be so happy as to see thee flourishing and revered in the house of a husband worthy of thee and me? Then hanging on thy neck, and kissing that august face, which I now touch with my hands, and shall I, my dearest father, I replied, shall I enjoy the satisfaction of receiving thee in my own palace, and by my filial cares and tenderness repay thy age that gratitude I owe thee? Oh, these soft conversations are ever present to my mind. Alas, thou hast forgot them, and all thy thoughts are bent upon destroying me. Oh quit, my father, quit this shocking purpose! Ah, spare thy Iphigenia! I conjure thee by the manes of Pelops and of Atreus, by my unhappy mother, who gave me to the world with pain, and who now sufferest on my account the sharper agonies of a second child-birth! Alas, what have I to do with Paris and Helen? why wilt thou sacrifice me for their crimes? Oh look on me, my father; hide not thy face from me; deny not thy soft embraces to thy child, whom thou hast doomed to

\* This speech begins a little like an harangue. The Greeks were naturally haranguers.

## Imitations by RACINE.

IPHIGENIE.

† Fille d'Agamemnon c'est moi qui la première,  
Seigneur, vous appellai de ce doux nom de pere.  
C'est moi, qui si long-tems le plaisir de vos yeux  
Vous ai fait de ce nom remercier les Dieux,  
Et pour qui tant de fois prodiguant vos caresses,  
Vous n'avez point du sang dédaigné les foiblesses.

ACT IV. Sc. IV.  
death :

death : if all my tears and prayers are fruitless, give me at least this last dear pledge of thy affection---Assist me, oh my brother ; alas, what assistance can thy tender age afford me ? yet thou canst weep, sweet infant ; thy little heart is sensible to compassion : aid me, then, with thy tears to move a father, and save thy sister's life. Behold him ; his speechless grief pleads for me. Oh, give way to tenderness and pity. See at thy feet two suppliants, who call thee father ; one yet a child, the other in youth's first bloom. Reject us not. Oh, consider, that nothing is to mortals so dear as life ; nothing so terrible as death : madness only can render death desirable ; even a wretched life is prized more than the most glorious death.

CHORUS.

Oh Helen, in what miseries has thy guilt involved the Atridæ, and their children !

AGAMEMNON.

\* I should be lost to reason, if I did not love my children : even now my bleeding heart is torn with anguish ; but ruin waits me if I yield. Barbarous as my purpose seems, it would be cruelty to forgo it --- Oh, Clytemnestra, this formidable fleet, these powerful kings, against whose efforts Troy will be impregnable, inaccessible its ports, till Iphigenia dies, so eager their desire to sail to Troy, that it resembles madness : they burn with ardor to reach that barbarous land, and to exterminate the ravishers of our wives. Should I elude the oracle which Calchas has pronounced, this furious army would invade my kingdom, and all my children would become victims to their rage : neither thee nor myself would their wild resentment spare. Judge, then, whether it be in my power to save my daughter. Oh, think not, my child, that Menelaus has enslaved me to his will : it is to Greece I sacrifice thee : the public liberty must be purchased with thy blood, and my eternal sorrow : thou must die, my Iphigenia, to teach those proud barbarians, that the Greeks suffer not ravishers to escape unpunished.

Imitations by RACINE

AGAMEMNON. \* Pour défendre vos jours de leurs loix meurtrières,  
Mon amour n'avoit pas attendu vos prières---&c.

Act IV. Sc. IV.



## \*SCENE the FOURTH.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, the CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, the barbarian flies, and delivers thee to death! Oh my child! oh strangers! oh wretched mother!

IPHIGENIA.

† The same complaints suit my sad fortune. Oh my mother! oh Clytemnestra! no more shall I behold the sun: this is the last of my days. Ye forests of Phrygia, ye mountains of Ida, where Paris snatched from the bosom of his mother was exposed; you whose name he bears, why did you not put a short period to his fatal life? why did he become a shepherd? why was he suffered to lead his flocks to the borders of a clear fountain, and in a meadow enameled with flowers, worthy to be gathered by the Goddesses? Alas! thither they came to my misfortune. The haughty Venus, who boasts her empire over hearts: the warlike Pallas, and the wife of Jove, contended for the prize of beauty. Oh Paris, thy detested judgment gives glory to the Greeks, and gives me death!

CHORUS.

Ah, lovely Iphigenia, thou art the victim chosen by Diana to open the way to Ilion!

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, Clytemnestra, oh, my mother, death is less terrible than the thoughts that he to whom I owe my being abandons and betrays me---Oh how miserable has Helen made me! For her I die, and die by the cruel hand of a father; a father deaf to the voice of nature. Why didst thou, Aulis, receive into thy ports the Grecian

\* In this scene Euripides changes the measure of his verse, as likewise in the seventh and eighth scenes of the same act, and in all the Choruses. The cadence he uses here is shorter, more animated, and more expressive of grief. I have endeavoured to give this turn to my translation as far as it was possible. It must be observed, that Clytemnestra in this scene falls into a swoon in the arms of her women, when Iphigenia leaves her.

† Euripides says, the same measure of verse suits with my fortune. This is a glaring fault. The actor ought never to seem conscious that he speaks in verse. The language he uses in order to please the ear ought insensibly to pass for ordinary language. I must suppose that I hear Iphigenia speak herself, and not the poet.

ships? Ye winds, the authors of my woes, why did you not bear the fleet to Troy? Ah, why detain it on the Euripus? ---- \* But Jupiter, the master of the winds, disposes as he pleases of their breath to mortals: to some propitious, to others unfavourable; to these he gives a happy voyage, those he detains reluctant in the port; he dispenses joy and sorrow at his will. Ah, how wretched is the condition of mankind! and death, must death be added also to their miseries?

CHORUS.

Alas, alas, the daughter of Tyndarus is the fruitful source of those misfortunes which afflict the Greeks! but thou, lovely and unhappy victim, art most to be lamented.

SCENE the FIFTH.

IPHIGENIA, CLYTEMNESTRA, the CHORUS,  
ACHILLES, and SOLDIERS.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah, who are these men? I tremble at their sight.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Be not alarmed, my child; behold Achilles, behold the husband for whom I brought thee hither.

IPHIGENIA.

Let me instantly retire into the palace, and hide me from his view.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whom is it thou wouldst fly, Iphigenia? thy deliverer?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, I would avoid Achilles: I dare not look upon him.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why, my child?

IPHIGENIA.

Ah, the sad event of this marriage fills me with confusion.

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† This sentence, extravagant in its proper sense, contains, as may be easily perceived, a moral one, which the poet had principally in view.



CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stay, Iphigenia; love will have no part in this conversation. This reserve is now unseasonable. It will not save thee, if yet there be a possibility of saving thee.

ACHILLES.

O Clytemnestra, how greatly do I pity thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou hast but too much cause, prince.

ACHILLES.

Nothing but confused cries are heard among the army.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, on whose account? Oh speak.

ACHILLES.

On Iphigenia's.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh fatal omen!

ACHILLES.

The whole army demands the victim.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And does none oppose these clamours?

ACHILLES.

I myself have been in danger of---

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Of what?

ACHILLES.

\* Of dying by their fury.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What! for attempting to preserve my daughter?

ACHILLES.

'Twas that provoked them.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What rash insolent dared to attempt thy life?

---

\* Of being stoned by them.

ACHILLES.

ACHILLES.

Not one, but all the Greeks.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Did not thy foldiers fly to thy assistance?

ACHILLES.

They were the first to rise against me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, my child, it is past; we are undone!

ACHILLES.

They were bold enough to tell me, I was unworthy of a bride whom I preferred to the safety of Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What didst thou say to them, prince?

ACHILLES.

Spare, at least, said I, the princess, who was to have been my wife---

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas!

ACHILLES.

Who was destined for me by her father---

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And brought from Argos to espouse thee.

ACHILLES.

Vain were all my pleas: their clamours grew louder every moment.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Unreasonable and cruel multitude!

ACHILLES.

Despair not; I can serve thee still.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How! wilt thou singly oppose an army?

ACHILLES, *pointing to his Soldiers.*

Seest thou these faithful friends armed in thy cause? They shall be thy defenders.

CLY-



CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, may the Gods prosper their valour !

ACHILLES.

Depend upon it, we shall succeed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall not my daughter die then ?

ACHILLES.

No; at least while I am able to defend her she shall not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And who will come to take her from thee ?

ACHILLES.

Ah, Clytemnestra, the whole army : Ulysses will come for her.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ulysses, that prince who is descended from Syfiphus ?

ACHILLES.

The same.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Did he seek this office, or was he chosen by the Greeks to execute it ?

ACHILLES.

He both sought it, and was named to it by the Greeks.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, the coward ! with what a vile employment is he charged !

ACHILLES.

I shall be able to force him hence.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will the wretch be barbarous enough to tear my child from me ?

ACHILLES.

Doubt it not ; he will drag her hence before thy eyes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What shall I do then, prince ?

ACHILLES.

Do not part with thy daughter.

CLY-

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

How shall I by my weak efforts hinder her from being sacrificed?

ACHILLES, *pointing either to his sword, or his soldiers.*

\* See what shall answer for her life.

## IPHIGENIA.

Hear me, my mother, and thou Achilles, hear me. I see that thou hast in vain opposed the will of Agamemnon. Let us not attempt impossibilities. This generous prince would rescue me; but ought I to consent, that he should turn the rage of the whole army upon himself and thee? Hear, then, the resolution with which Heaven inspires me. Oh, Clytemnestra, I will die †: but this is little; I will die without a murmur or complaint, and consign my name to immortality by a voluntary and glorious death. Do not, my mother, oppose my just resolves. On me the eyes of Greece are fixed. On me alone depends the fate of Troy. My death shall purchase a favourable voyage to the Greeks, revenge the rape of Helen, and hinder these barbarians for the future from laying their profane hands upon the Grecian matrons. By dying I shall preserve them all. I shall be considered as the deliverer of Greece. And is not this glorious title worthy of envy? Ought I who may acquire it regret the loss? You gave me this life less for yourselves than for your country. For Greece how many of her sons have taken arms, and dare to combat and to die for her: and shall I be so basely covetous of life as to stop this noble enterprize? Shall I permit Achilles to oppose an army in my defence, and throw away his life to preserve mine? The life of ‡ one man is more precious than the lives of many women. Is it not Diana who claims me for a victim? and shall I, a poor weak

\* Barnes is the only one I know who has explained this passage justly, ἀλλὰ μὴ τίς τέρψεται; *See what will put an end to this affair; it will come to this.* And not, *Ulysses will come for this.*

† It would be injustice not to confess, that Aristotle, in the 16th chapter of his poetics, charges Euripides with having neglected to observe an equality of manners in his character of this princess. The trembling, the suppliant Iphigenia, whom we see in the beginning of this piece, is not the same firm, courageous Iphigenia whom we see at the conclusion of it. M. Dacier has not scrupled to condemn Euripides upon

this criticism. Certainly the impression this tragedy makes upon the mind, is a good reason for thinking differently. This mixture of weakness and fortitude shews the hand of a master perfect in his art.

‡ This line proves the truth of that observation which has been made by so many authors, that Euripides was no friend to the sex. His words in the original are, γυναικῶν μυριάς, *an infinite number of women.* It would be a difficult matter to express the hatred of Euripides in all its force. The Italian poet Dolce made no scruple to translate it thus, *Mille femine infame, e mille, e mille.*

mortal,



mortal, resist a Goddess? No; I will die for my country: to her I voluntarily devote myself. And now, ye Greeks, behold me ready: lead me to the altar; sacrifice your victim, and triumph over Troy. Your trophies shall be my glory, and to me for ever hold the place of marriage and posterity. 'Tis just that the Barbarians should be subject to the Greeks, and not the Greeks to the Barbarians: the latter were formed for slavery, but liberty is the glorious birthright of the former.

## CHORUS.

Oh, princess, how greatly generous is thy resolution! but alas, fortune and the Goddess are unjust.

## ACHILLES.

Oh, worthy daughter of Agamemnon! the Gods, jealous of my bliss, denied thee to me. I envy the destiny of Greece. I envy thy destiny: thou wilt augment her glory; she will add to thine. Thy resolution is worthy of thy country, and of thyself. Thou, without seeking to oppose the will of heaven, hast yielded to necessity and the public good. How has this act increased my love for thee, thou noble maid! Yes, Iphigenia, this greatness of mind, this fortitude shews me the value of what I have lost in losing thee. Yet do not let me lose thee: refuse not the assistance of this arm; oh, suffer me to save thee. Bear witness, Thetis, I shall die with grief, with madness, with despair, if I deliver thee not from these inhuman Greeks. Oh, Iphigenia, reflect how terrible the death that waits thee is, and suffer me to rescue thee.

## IPHIGENIA.

No, prince, it is for Helen, for her fatal beauty, to animate the Greeks to fight and die for her. — I seek not such false glory. Spare me the grief of seeing thee shed thy blood, or that of the Greeks for me; and suffer me to save my country by my death.

## ACHILLES.

\* Oh nobleness of mind! which tho' it ruins all my hopes, I must

---

\* It will perhaps seem surprising that a lover should in some degree consent to the voluntary death of his mistress. Racine carries the tenderness of Achilles much farther: he makes him vow to save Iphigenia, whether she will or not: he defies both the army and the Gods; and war and tumult begins. Thus should it be for our age; but the great veneration the ancients had for sacrifices and voluntary consecrations, obliged

must admire. I yield, Iphigenia, to thy fortitude and courage; for why should I dissemble? I cannot disapprove these noble sentiments: but yet perhaps thou mayst repent that thou hast carried them so far. I go resolved therefore to keep my word; I will place myself with these soldiers near the altar, not to be a witness of thy fatal death, but to be thy defender: for when the horrid steel hangs o'er thy head, then perhaps thou wilt yield to my advice. I leave thee, Iphigenia; but do not imagine that I will abandon thee to thy rash vow. I am going to the temple of Diana to wait thee there.

## SCENE the SIXTH.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah mother! thou art silent, thy eyes are bathed in tears.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! have I not cause to weep?

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, do not melt me thus, my mother! endeavour rather to fortify my mind. One favour I would implore of thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak, can I refuse thee any thing?

IPHIGENIA.

\* Cut not off thy hair; let not thy veils and garments shew that thou lamentest my death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, my child! what a request is this? what an unnatural mother should I be, if I concealed my grief for having lost thee!

obliged Euripides to shew Achilles more length he departs fully determined to deliberate. This prince endeavours to ver her if she revokes her vow; but while make Iphigenia change her design; which, that subsists, she is a sacred victim. This however he cannot help admiring, it vow ties the hands of Achilles. This is not in his power to do more. At \* In the original. *Nor your black garments.*



IPHIGENIA.

Thou dost not lose me, I shall live for ever ; and my glory shall reflect back on thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall I not lament my daughter, descended to the tomb?

IPHIGENIA.

To me it is no tomb.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wilt thou not die then?

IPHIGENIA.

\* The altar of the Goddess shall be my monument.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh my child ! I will do as thou requirest me.

IPHIGENIA.

Look upon me as the fortunate deliverer of Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What shall I say to thy afflicted sisters, in thy name?

IPHIGENIA.

Let not their grief for me shew itself in their garments.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall I not bear them some tender remembrance from thee?

IPHIGENIA.

Tell them I embrace them ; as for my little brother, be tender of him.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Give him a last embrace.

IPHIGENIA.

Sweet infant, thou hast served me as far as thou wert able.

---

\* She utters this enigma prophetically ; the sense of which is, that she shall be carried away by Diana to be the priestess of her temple in Tauris.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What dost thou wish I should do for thee, my Iphigenia, when I return to Argos?

IPHIGENIA.

Love and revere thy husband and my father.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, he deserves to suffer the severest miseries, in revenge for having sacrificed thee!

IPHIGENIA.

Unwillingly, and to Greece he sacrifices me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say rather by a falsehood unworthy of the blood of Atreus.

IPHIGENIA.

Who attends to lead me to the altar? I go a voluntary victim; I wait not to be dragged.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, my child, I will go with thee! I will not leave thee, Iphigenia; thy wretched mother will hang upon thy garments.

IPHIGENIA.

No, this must not be. For my sake, and for thy own, I beg thee, I conjure thee to retire. \* Let some of my father's attendants accompany me to the meadow consecrated to Diana, where I am to be sacrificed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou leavest me then, Iphigenia?

IPHIGENIA.

For ever, and without return.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou wilt abandon thy mother then!

IPHIGENIA.

To meet a death I have not merited.

\*She speaks to the domesticks of Agamemnon, who had remained upon the stage. By what follows, it appears that Agamemnon himself was with them at the bottom of the stage.



## IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stay, cruel Iphigenia; leave me not in this distress, this agon of grief.

IPHIGENIA.

I will not any longer prolong thy misery \*.

## SCENE the SEVENTH.

IPHIGENIA, the CHORUS.

IPHIGENIA.

Begin, ye virgins, begin the hymn in honour of Diana; be your songs a prelude to the sacrifice, and give the Greeks a happy omen. Let the sacred ceremony begin: bring the baskets, kindle the fire to burn the cakes of immolation: let my father lay his hand upon the altar. Greece shall by me become victorious; for Greece I fall a happy victim, and fatal to the Phrygians. Prepare the sacred fillets; crown my head; invoke Diana, the queen, the propitious Diana; pour the lustral water, and the libations round her temple and her altar. I go in obedience to the oracle, to offer up my life.

CHORUS.

Oh venerable mother! Oh Clytemnestra! we are no longer permitted to give tears to thy misfortunes, † the sacred ceremony forbids our sorrow.

IPHIGENIA.

Sing, oh my virgins! sing the praises of Diana. The Goddess dwells in Aulis: she presides over those shores where armed Greece is now detained for me. Oh my loved native land! Oh Argos! Oh Mycene, where I was to reign!

CHORUS.

Why dost thou princess call upon that city built by the hands of the Cyclops?

\* It is probable that Clytemnestra here falls into a swoon, and is carried into the palace, while Iphigenia exhorts the Chorus to sing hymns in honour of Diana. At the bottom of the theatre, the preparations for the sacrifice might doubtless be seen;

for the women who compose the Chorus seem to be eye-witnesses of it.

† This line confirms what has been before observed concerning the respect of the ancients for sacrifices and voluntary consecrations.

Oh

IPHIGENIA.

Oh Mycene! in thy bosom was I born; like a fair rising star thou didst behold me-----Yet will I hold my purpose---Yes, I will die for Greece.

CHORUS.

Thy fame, thy honour after death, will be immortal.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh day! Oh sun! Oh thou bright light of Jupiter! I go to other regions, to live in other worlds, and take an everlasting leave of thee.

SCENE the EIGHTH.

The CHORUS.

\* Ah! see the victim goes; the lovely victim, who triumphs over Ilion and the Phrygians: behold she is crowned; behold her ready to receive the fatal blow. Ah! see the sacred knife held o'er her head---And now---Oh Gods! she goes to bleed upon the altar---See, she draws near.---Go beauteous victim; a father waits thee with the lustral water, surrounded by the army, who fight for nothing but to behold the Trojan shores---and now the fatal moment is come---Let us invoke Diana; let us beseech her to be favourable. Oh awful Goddess! if thou must have human victims, conduct the Greeks to Troy; to treacherous Troy. Give victory to Agamemnon, and bring him and his army triumphant home, to offer thee in the name of Greece, a splendid crown, as an eternal monument of his glory.

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\* Several commentators have thought that something was wanting between the sixth and the seventh scenes; and it is possible they are in the right: but in my opinion, it is this scene which is defective, because it is too short for the sacrifice. The following recital supposes a longer interval; yet the commentators have taken no notice

of it, though the fault is plain enough. However, it is reasonable to believe that the void in this scene was filled up solely with the musical instruments, to increase the concernment of the audience. As no other person has, I believe, given us his conjectures upon this subject, mine may be admitted, till better are offered.



## SCENE the NINTH.

A MESSENGER, CLYTEMNESTRA,  
the CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Where is the queen? Oh Clytemnestra appear\*, and listen to the prodigies I come to relate to thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Trembling I come, for oh! dost thou not bring me new misfortunes?

MESSENGER.

No, I come to tell thee the amazing destiny of thy daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh haste, and satisfy my impatience!

MESSENGER.

Thy daughter, great queen, was by the whole army conducted to the meadow sacred to Diana: the Greeks assembled round her. Agamemnon, when he saw her advance towards the fatal ground, turned aside his head; tears ran from his eyes, and he† covered his face with his robe. His daughter drew near him

\* The queen had retired into the palace towards the close of the sixth scene.

† This description furnished Timante with the subject of his celebrated picture.

The poet deserves as least as much praise as the painter. Racine has also veiled his Agamemnon, but in a manner that has left room for criticism to censure him.

Imitations by RACINE.

"Achille est à l'autel. Calchas est éperdu;

"Le fatal sacrifice est encor suspendu.

"On se menace, on court, l'air gémit, le fer brille.

"Achille fait ranger autour de votre fille

"Tous ses amis pour lui prêts à se dévouer.

"Le triste Agamemnon qui n'ose l'avouer,

"Pour détourner les yeux des meurtres qu'il présage

"Ou pour cacher ses pleurs s'est voilé le visage."

This Agamemnon then, this sovereign of so many kings, instead of taking up arms to quell the sedition, contents himself with

covering his face; he who had a little while before expressed himself thus:

"Ma gloire intéressée emporte la balance.

"Achille menaçant détermine mon cœur."

Surely

him, and thus spoke: "Behold me ready, oh my father, to meet my death; for my country, and for all Greece, I willingly devote myself. Lead me to the altar, sacrifice me, and obey the oracle. Be happy, oh Greeks, if my death can make you so; offer up your victim who secures you victory, and return triumphant. But let no one lay his hands upon me; I will present my bosom to the stroke." She said; the whole assembly were struck with wonder and admiration, to behold such fortitude and virtue in such early youth. Talthibius, who presided at the sacrifice, was standing up in the midst of the kneeling army. Ye Greeks, cried he, observe an awful silence, and form happy presages. Calchas drew his sword, placed it in a golden vase, and crowned the victim. Achilles himself took a cup filled with sacred water, and advancing towards the altar, "Oh Goddess, said he, daughter of Jupiter, thou who delightest in the chase of savage beasts, thou who shinest the glorious luminary of the night, accept this victim, which Achilles, Agamemnon, and the whole army offer thee; and grant to our ardent prayers, a happy voyage, and the conquest of Ilium." Mean time, the Atrides, and all the Greeks, remained in silent anguish, with their eyes bent to the ground. The priest took up the sword, marked with his eye the place where he intended to strike, and invoked the Gods. I trembled with horror, and turned aside my eyes. Calchas struck, when behold an amazing prodigy! the victim disappeared, no one perceived how; doubtless this miracle was the work of some Divinity. The high priest gave a cry, which was echoed by the whole army: they saw the prodigy, and can scarce believe their eyes. A hind of an extraordinary size, and surprising beauty, lay extended on the earth, its heart still beating, and the altar streaming with its blood. Ye brave commanders of the Grecian army, cried Calchas, transported with joy, behold this new victim. The Goddess, satisfied with our submission, has substituted this animal in the place of Iphigenia, and would not suffer the precious blood of so virtuous a princess to be shed upon her altars. 'Tis done, Diana grants our prayers; she smooths our course to Troy. At these words the whole army seem-

Surely, in the midst of this tumult and confusion, he ought to have appeared like the general of an army, and not like a father overwhelmed with grief. I have enlarged upon this observation which was first made by a person of great judgment. Euripides has not fallen into the same error.

The whole army, submissive and silent, is prostrate at the foot of the altar: even Achilles, tho' reluctantly, obeys the Gods, and respects the sacred vow of Iphigenia. Agamemnon, therefore was at liberty to indulge his grief, and then the covering his face is beautiful.



ed to recover new spirit; they crouded to the ships with eager haste; they climbed the sides, and prepared for their departure. This day, oh queen, we shall quit Aulis, and sail upon the Egean sea! Calchas, after the victim was consumed in the sacred fire, offered vows for the happy return of the army, and closed the sacrifice. This was what I was commanded by Agamemnon to relate to thee. Go, said he to me, tell the queen the new favours bestowed upon us by the Gods; and the glory to which Greece has raised me. I was myself a witness of this spectacle, therefore thou mayst believe me, princess. Pardon thy husband, no longer mourn for Iphigenia; she is fled to the Gods. The same day that saw her death saw her revive to immortality. Thus do the just Gods, in mercy cast their eyes upon poor mortals, when they least expect it, and preserve those whose virtue have merited their favour.

#### CHORUS.

I congratulate thy happiness, oh queen! thy daughter lives, and lives in the society of the Gods.

#### CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh my daughter! what God has bore thee to the skies? by what name shall I henceforth call thee? yet am I not deceived? was not the story of this prodigy invented to calm my sorrows?

#### MESSENGER.

Agamemnon comes himself to confirm the truth of what I have told thee.

#### SCENE the TENTH.

To them AGAMEMNON.

#### AGAMEMNON.

Cease to be anxious, Clytemnestra, for the fate of thy daughter. She (doubt it not) enjoys the society of the Gods. Take this infant and return to Argos; the fleet is preparing to sail. Farewel, Clytemnestra; our conversations shall be longer when I return from Troy. Go, and live happy.

#### CHORUS.

Oh son of Atreus, may joy accompany thee in thy voyage, and welcome thy return! mayst thou come back a conqueror, and loaded with the rich spoils of Troy!

# OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

OF

EURIPIDES, LODOVICO DOLCE,

ROTROU, and RACINE.

**I**PHIGENIA is better known in France by Racine than Euripides, yet the Greek poet merits no less praise than the French; although the picture they have each drawn is very different. If the imitator has given new graces to the original, he has borrowed others of him, which he confesses himself have been most admired. It is by building with equal elegance and strength upon the foundation of the ancients that he has deserved this eulogium from Boileau.

“ Que tu sçais bien, Racine, à l'aide d'un Acteur,

“ Etonner, émouvoir, ravir un Spectateur !

“ Jamais Iphigénie en Aulide immolée

“ Ne coûta tant de pleurs à la Grèce assemblée,

“ Que dans l'heureux spectacle à nos yeux étalé

“ En a fait sous son nom verser la Chammeilé.”

The necessity of filling a French tragedy with incidents was at least as strong a motive with Racine, for introducing the episode of Eriphile, as his inclination to spare the audience the prodigy of the hind substituted in the place of Iphigenia. This episode indeed rises out of the subject, as he observes; and is therefore more excusable than that of Aricia in Phedra: but still they are episodes; and by these two theatrical springs, which so nearly resemble each



other, it happens that Achilles scarce preserves more of his real characters in the tragedy of Iphigenia than Hippolitus does in that of Phedra. Achilles, gallant and French as he is, contradicts in some degree, the Greek Achilles: but this hero, now become a Frenchman, has left such deep impressions on most minds, that without some reflection and some indulgence the Greek hero will not fail to shock us. Thus the old portraits of our ancestors in their antique habits lose all their beauty when compared with modern portraits, where the drapery is wholly imaginary. Racine has taken the same liberty with the characters of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. As for Agamemnon, he is nearly the same: he is not less a father, nor less a king in Euripides than in Racine; but in the latter, he is differently a king. Two other celebrated authors have treated this subject with great success: Lewis Dolce an Italian, and our own Rotrou. We shall compare all the four tragedies. The Iphigenia of Dolce, reprinted in the year 1566, and that of Rotrou, which appeared in 1649, certainly deserve a place in this parallel, were it only to shew the progress of the human mind in tragedy. The French criticks, and particularly father Rapin, speak too concisely, and in too vague a manner upon the several theatres of Europe. It is not possible to form a right judgment of their merits without comparing them with each other: let us therefore first take a view of the oeconomy of each tragedy.

## A C T I.

The three imitators of Euripides have translated his whole first scene, and certainly they could not have done better: it is a finished piece. The perplexity of Agamemnon, now more a father than a king, produces a double effect, and both admirable: for first the compassion of the audience is raised, and they are interested in the event, from the beginning of the play; and secondly, it explains the subject and all its dependant circumstances, with the utmost simplicity, and in such a manner as nature would do if she would give us the reality instead of the representation. Rotrou has endeavoured to improve upon Euripides, by shewing Agamemnon at first in the inner part of his tent, where he writes a letter, tears it, writes another, and then calls a servant. This soliloquy is several times interrupted by the ceremony of introducing the confidant. The remaining part of the scene is wholly taken from Euripides. Dolce has only lengthened it; and Racine preserves it all. The only difference there is between these four scenes arises from the dif-

difference of the times and manners. In Euripides, we have a king in the Grecian taste: that is, as we think a little too simple. Dolce has given him the air of an Italian prince. Rotrou raises him still higher; but in Racine, he has all the majesty of a French monarch. The writings of authors, like the pictures of painters, always partake of the difference of ages and countries; so that a nice eye will be able to distinguish the date of a picture or a work of genius, by the strokes he discovers in it. This observation holds good in theatrical compositions; and is applicable not only to all the four Iphigenias, but also to all tragedies, whether ancient or modern.

After this excellent scene, Euripides brings in the Chorus, which makes another, and concludes the act. This has by other poets been judged too simple. Dolce, to lengthen the act, introduces Calchas, and Rotrou raises new doubts and perplexities in the mind of Agamemnon; but notwithstanding all these alterations, the system of the Greek poet still holds its place. As for Racine, he brings Achilles and Ulysses upon the stage, who speak the language of Homer; the source of many striking beauties in his tragedy. In the following speech he has imitated Rotrou, to whom also he owes the character of Ulysses. It is Agamemnon who speaks to the king of Ithaca.

“ \* Ah ! Seigneur, qu'éloigne du malheur qui m'opprime  
 “ Votre cœur aisément se montre magnanime !  
 “ Mais que, si vous voyez ceint du bandeau mortel  
 “ Votre fils Telemaque approcher de l'Autel,  
 “ Nous vous verrions touché de cette affreuse image  
 “ Changer bientôt en pleurs ce superbe langage,  
 “ Eprouver la douleur que j'éprouve aujourd'hui,  
 “ Et courir vous jeter entre Calchas & lui !

Rotrou lefs elegantly says,

“ † J'avois sans ce discours afflex de connoissance  
 “ De l'adresse d'Ulyffe, & de son éloquence :  
 “ Mais il éprouveroit en un pareil ennui  
 “ Que le sang est encor plus éloquent que lui.

\* Racine's Iphigenia, Act 1. Scene III.

† Rotrou's Iphigenia, Act 2. Scene III.



Racine has in this tragedy imitated many other passages both in Homer and Rotrou; but so happily that we cannot possibly blame him for it. To imitate well is a talent which few possess.

## A C T II.

The plan which Racine here follows, is very different from the original, on account of the episode of Eriphile; yet the French poet has preserved that beautiful scene in the third act of the Greek tragedy, where Iphigenia has an interview with her father: but he has taken nothing from the second act of Euripides, but the surprise of Iphigenia's arrival, notwithstanding all the precautions taken by the king to prevent her coming. Dolce and Rotrou have followed the Greek step by step; except in a few inconsiderable alterations. Their speeches are longer, but not more energetick. The speech of Menelaus in Rotrou is worth observing.

" \* Ne vous souvient-il pas avec combien d'adresse

" Vous vous êtes fait chef des troupes de la Grèce.

" Ah! comme ce grand cœur se sçavoit abbaïsser!

" Le front ne portoit pas l'image du penser,

" Et votre modestie alors incomparable,

" Fut un adroit chemin à ce rang honorable.

" Jamais pour s'élever on ne se mit si bas.

" Vous offriez à l'un, à l'autre ouvriez les bras,

" Serriez à l'un la main, jettiez les yeux sur l'autre,

" Portiez votre intérêt beaucoup moins que le nôtre;

" De qui vous demandoit vous préveniez les pas,

" Parliez à qui vouloit, & qui ne vouloit pas,

" Et lors votre maison â tout le monde ouverte,

" Jusques aux basses-cours n'étoit jamais déserte.

" Mais quand cette affectée & fausse humilité

" Vous eut de notre chef acquis la qualité,

" Un soudain changement de mœurs & de visage

" Fut de cet artifice un trop clair témoignage, &c."

This poetry is not indeed equal to Racine's; but all it wants to make it so is that elegant turn, and that purity for which he is remarkable.

The debate between Menelaus and his brother is as spirited as in Euripides. Racine, tho' he has suppressed the character of Mene-

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\* Racine's Iphigenia, Act 4. Scene 6.

laus, yet that he might preserve as much of this dialogue as he can, puts many of the speeches into the mouths of Clytemnestra, Ulysses, and Achilles: but it was the jealous Eriphile, who pleased most, as being more conformable to the reigning taste of our age.

This debate between the two brothers is however extremely fine. We find in it all that eloquence which can make a cause beautiful, suspend the judgment, and keep up in the audience that concernment so necessary to the theatre, without wandering from the subject. Racine, who well knew the effect this scene would produce, has supplied it by another quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. It is in the sixth scene of his fourth act, where we find this beautiful passage of Homer's so greatly applauded in our time. It is Achilles who speaks.

“ Hé, que m'a fait à moi cette Troye où je cours ?

“ Au pied de ses remparts quel intérêt m'appelle ?

“ Pour qui, sourd à la voix d'une mere immortelle,

“ Et d'un pere éperdu négligeant les avis,

“ Vais-je y chercher la mort tant prédite à leur fils ?

“ Jamais vaisseaux partis des rives du Scamandre

“ Aux champs Thessaliens oferent-ils descendre ?

“ Et jamais dans Larisse un lâche ravisseur

“ Me vint-il enlever ou ma femme ou ma sœur ?”

This passage and many others translated from the ancients, by good French writers, are unanswerable proofs of their merit. If they had Racines for translators, they would not raise less admiration now than they did formerly.

### A C T III.

Euripides has been imitated by no one in the first scene of his third act, neither Dolce nor Rotrou; and still less would Racine venture to introduce a chariot upon the stage, and make Clytemnestra and her daughter alight, with the little Orestes asleep: a spectacle of such extreme simplicity is suited only to the ancient manners. Yet to those who love the artless representations of nature, it will not appear less beautiful. A mother who receives the officious respects of a croud of women, and would have them applaud her happiness in being the mother of such a daughter. A young princess, whose joy and pride at being soon to become the wife of Achilles, are perceived through all her modesty and reserve. An infant lulled asleep by the fatigue of the journey; who, because

of



of his tender age, can take no sensible interest in any thing that passes. The tender anxiety, and the precautions taken by this mother, attentive to every thing which relates to her children: all those pleasing preparations for an event which is never to happen. What truth in this picture! Racine has taken from it all that was not wholly inconsistent with our manners; nor have his two predecessors neglected to copy some strokes in it. In the rest of the act, Racine, who always pursues the point he has in view, anticipates Euripides. The quarrel between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, raises great concernment. Achilles comes to an explanation with the queen; his passion for Iphigenia is increased; he discovers the mystery of the sacrifice; he is enraged, and Eriphile triumphs. These are the incidents which compose this act. Dolce and Rotrou have followed Euripides more faithfully, indeed too faithfully; and are rather translators than poets. It is certain, however, that Iphigenia's interview with her father: Clytemnestra's with her husband, and Agamemnon's solicitude, to hinder the queen from being present at the sacrifice, afford matter sufficient to fill an act. But Racine, whose plan made it necessary, has distributed this matter with greater extent, and Euripides with greater simplicity: so that in the former, there is more variety; in the latter more tenderness. In Racine, several different interests raise different concernments, and divide the attention of the spectators. In Euripides, our eyes are constantly fixed upon Iphigenia: she engrosses all our thoughts; her simplicity increases our concern for her. To mention only that scene where she accosts the king her father: this scene is indeed shorter, and more noble in the French, but it is more tender and moving in the Greek. Here Iphigenia appears less a princess, and more amiable; Agamemnon less a king, and more a father. There is another difference which cannot fail of striking the imagination of the reader, which will be taken notice of presently. It must be acknowledged, to the praise of Dolce, that he has treated this scene like a great master who well understood his original. He has copied that beautiful simplicity of Iphigenia (which the Italian language is more capable of than ours) in the several questions she puts to her father, who is so much affected with it, that he is obliged to invent an excuse to conceal the real cause of those sighs and tears which escape him. "Alas! says she, what shall I say to please thee, and allay this grief?" Thus I have turned it. Dolce has ventured to translate this speech more literally; and has been happy enough not to render

the author's thought, which is so beautiful in the original, contemptible in his own language.

"Esser vorrei per aggradirvi sciocca

"*Ασύντα μὲν ἔσθ' ἐγὼ περ, εἰ σίγ' ὑφ' ἑσέων.*"

This stroke, which so naturally paints the extreme perplexity of both father and daughter, without reckoning upon many others which Racine durst not meddle with, and which in our age, where nature is more constrained by something that is called dignity of sentiment, would not be well received, nor even hazarded by the ancients, were they to return to the world now.

A C T IV. and V.

In the fourth act, the necessity of playing off the epifode of Eriphile has obliged the French poet to make a scene for this jealous princess, entirely detached from the rest: for Clytemnestra appears on one side of the stage, while Eriphile goes out on the other. What follows is taken from Euripides, except the scene between Achilles and Agamemnon, which has already been taken notice of. As for the Greek poet, we see he has filled this act with a scene between Achilles and Clytemnestra: another with the discovery made by the confidant of the whole mystery of the sacrifice; and lastly, with the resentment of Achilles upon this news.

Racine's fifth act is founded upon the revolution Eriphile makes, by betraying Iphigenia, who is by this act of treachery delivered over to Calchas. Achilles, with his sword in his hand, penetrates even to the altar.

"Et quoique seul pour elle Achille furieux

"Epouvantoit l' Armée & partageoit les Dieux."

Calchas puts a stop to all these movements, by looking upon Eriphile, and declaring that it is her who under a borrowed name is the Iphigenia demanded by the Goddesses. We cannot help asking here why Calchas, who knew all, did not sooner reveal the secret? and why, when he does reveal it, he is so readily believed by the chiefs of the army, who throughout the whole piece seem to pay but little regard to him? but this perhaps would be a cavil, and we must resign ourselves to the enchantments of the theatre. And after all, it must be confessed, that this incident is finely imagined with regard to our manners, as Racine so resaw; for how would the sacrifice of Iphigenia have been suffered, or her preservation



vation by an incredible prodigy? Even Dolce could not support the prodigy; and among other little liberties which he has taken, he makes the actor, who gives an account of the sacrifice, say, "Some persons imagined they saw a hind instead of Iphigenia."

"Ma creder non voglio io quel che non vidi."

So that in his tragedy Iphigenia not only dies, but is beheaded with all the forms.

"Alhor tornando à la fanciulla veggo

"Qui l'infelice testa, e colà il corpo."

Rotrou makes some little alterations in the machine; and after giving the audience a view of the sacrifice, which is however a fine theatrical incident, he makes the victim disappear so suddenly, that the assistants ask,

"Qui des deux nous la cache, ou la terre ou les cieux?"

Immediately Diana appears, and thus the tragedy is ended with some kind of probability, since the audience are informed that Iphigenia had been in her infancy dedicated to Diana. Dolce and Rotrou have in all the rest followed with sufficient exactness, the plan of Euripides, except in two circumstances, and these very considerable, where Dolce continues faithful to his original, while Rotrou and Racine have studiously deviated from him. It is in the characters of Iphigenia and Achilles, characters so essential to the whole tragedy, that they deserve to be examined with particular attention. Those of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon had been so strongly marked by Euripides, that his successors have not thought it necessary to add any new strokes. Only Racine, by giving more greatness to both, a little at the expence of tenderness, has wisely suppressed many of those reproaches uttered by Clytemnestra against her husband: reproaches shocking to our manners, and which render these characters less estimable, tho' more like. Rotrou thinks it not enough for Clytemnestra to say to the king her husband,

"Va, pere indigne d'elle, & digne fils d'Atrée,

"Par qui la loi du sang fut si peu réverée;

"Et qui crut comme toi faire un exploit fameux

"Au repas qu'il dressa des corps de ses neveux.

Which Racine has imitated and softened thus;

"Vous

- “ Vous ne démentez point une race funeste.  
 “ Oui, vous êtes le sang d’ Atrée & de Thyeste,  
 “ Bourreau de votre fille il ne vous reste enfin  
 “ Que d’en faire à sa mere un horrible festin.”

Rotroucopies Euripides in adding also the reproach of being the murderer of the former husband, and the son Clytemnestra had by him: she also calls him a ravisher, which Racine has judged right to suppress. But we will now return to the other two characters.

In Euripides, Ephigenia does not instantly become a heroine: she has some struggles before she can bring herself to a resolution to die. Nature speaks in her before virtue. She is ignorant at first of the great benefit her death is to purchase for the Greeks, and she looks upon herself as the victim of Menelaus, rather than of her country. She does not scruple to implore her father’s mercy: she makes use of Clytemnestra’s efforts in her favour: she endeavours to move him by her arguments, her tears, her youth, and even by the eloquent silence of the young Orestes. All this is extremely affecting, and did not shock an Athenian audience. And Dolce supposed an Italian one would not be displeased with this speech of Iphigenia’s.

- “ Ben. sapete, che à tutti è dolce il lume  
 “ Di questo Cielo: e vi ritorni à mente,  
 “ Ch’io prima di tutt’ altri miei fratelli  
 “ Vi chiamai padre; & voi di tutti ancora  
 “ Questi, figlivola mi chiamaste prima.  
 “ Ricordivi, che’l primo dolce peso  
 “ Fui de le vostre braccia, e prima io n’hebbi  
 “ I cari baci, e ve gli diedi spesso, &c.”

But Rotrou and Racine were of a different opinion; and they had reason for it in France, where life indeed is as much prized as in any other country, but where it is expected a great contempt of it should be shewn. These poets therefore give none of this weakness to Iphigenia. As soon as she is acquainted with Agamemnon’s intention, Racine makes her say,

- “ Mon pere,  
 “ Cessez de vous troubler, vous n’êtes point trahi.  
 “ Quand vous commanderez, vous serez obéi;  
 “ Ma vie est votre bien. Vous pouvez le reprendre;  
 “ Vos ordres, sans détour, pouvoient se faire entendre.

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H h h

“ D’un



" D'un œil aussi content, d'un cœur aussi soumis  
 " Que j'acceptois l'époux que vous m'aviez promis,  
 " Je sçaurai, s'il le faut, victime obéissante,  
 " Tendre au fer de Calchas une tête innocente,  
 " Et respectant le coup par vous-même ordonné  
 " Vous rendre tout le sang que vous m'avez donné."

And Rotrou,

" Le sang qui sortira de ce sein innocent  
 " Prouvera malgré vous sa source en se versant."

Yet it is certain that both the French poets have been sensible of the beauty and even the propriety of that weakness which Euripides gives at first to his Iphigenia; and he who wrote latest has followed the traces of the Greek poet in these lines, where it is just suffered to appear.

" Si pourtant ce respect, si cette obéissance  
 " Paroit digne à vos yeux d'une autre récompense,  
 " Si d'une mere en pleurs vois plaignez les ennuis,  
 " J'ose vous dire ici qu'en l'état où je suis  
 " Peut-être affez d'honneurs environnoient ma vie  
 " Pour ne pas souhaiter qu'elle me fût ravie,  
 " Ni qu'en me l'arrachant un sévère destin  
 " Si près de ma naissance en eût marqué la fin  
 " Fille d'Agamemnon, c'est moi qui la première,  
 " Seigneur, vous appellai de ce doux nom de pere :  
 " C'est moi qui, si long-tems le plaisir de vos yeux  
 " Vous ai fait de ce nom remercier les Dieux.  
 " Et pour qui tant de fois prodiguant vos caresses,  
 " Nous n'avez point du sang dédaigné les foibles."

Besides, Iphigenia consents to make her escape with Clytemnestra, and this flight, which is rendered fruitless, agreeably prolongs the action. Iphigenia would certainly have little claim to our esteem in the original, if she continued obstinate in her endeavours to avoid being sacrificed; but after reflecting upon the glory of such a death, she accepts it so generously, she refuses with so much constancy the assistance of Achilles, she makes preparations for the sacrifice, and at length resigns herself to it with such greatness of mind, that her first complaints, terrors, and reluctance to die, and even the sighs and complaints that escape her in her last farewell, only exalt her character. This

mixture of weakness and of courage, is undoubtedly the secret mover of the tenderness of the stage, and the poetical instrument which draws tears from the spectators. Iphigenia is less a lover in Euripides than in Racine. There is less weakness in her character, and our attention to her misfortune is not interrupted by superfluous scenes. Her devoting herself is more a voluntary act; for the least of those sighs which she gives her lover in the French play, or the slightest hint that she wished to live, would in the Greek tragedy have authorised Achilles to save her. But she rejects the offers of that hero, even at the altar; and generously presents her bosom to Calchas, who strikes his victim. The French Iphigenia does not go so far; the poet makes her lover, whom the parting words of his mistress has softened too much, free her from her perplexity and the spectators, from their anxiety on her account.

The heroine therefore is not put to the last trial of her fortitude; and consequently, her voluntary devoting herself is by so much the less shining, since in such cases, the will and the effect are two very different things.

In Racine, Achilles is quite a Frenchman; the poet represented him thus, because he was to please those whom he had formed to this taste of gallantry in tragedy. He feigns that the passion of Achilles for Iphigenia was authorised by her parents: this occasions a difficulty, which he rather artfully palliates than removes; for it is not very probable that Agamemnon would have drawn his daughter to Aulis, to sacrifice her, under colour of marrying her to a hero, whose love for her was publickly known, nor allow the report of this marriage to bespread thro' the army. The conduct of Euripides here is very different; for he supposes that Achilles is ignorant that Iphigenia is destined for his wife: even her arrival surprises the whole army, who know not the real motive for it. It is these two contrary suppositions that make the Achilles of Racine so different from the Achilles of Euripides. Racine shews him in the second act alike occupied with schemes of love and war. It certainly required great art to unite love and glory thus in the mind of a hero, whose true character is made up of pride, courage, and impetuosity. All the other scenes of Achilles are in the same taste: however in the end a motive of glory mixes itself with the interests of love.

In the Greek poet, it is the impatience of Achilles to depart for Troy, that brings him to Agamemnon's palace, whom he thinks in fault for their long delay. Clytemnestra meets him, and salutes

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him



him as her son-in-law. Achilles, who is not able to comprehend one word she says, expresses his surprize in a manner little conformable to our ideas; but so naturally for the age Euripides lived in, that it would be mere cavilling to find fault with it. We will excuse the ancient Achilles then for declining Clytemnestra's civility; but it is less easy to comprehend, and consequently more difficult to pardon him in some other instances; and first, where speaking of Agamemnon, he says, "Has he not authorised me to love the princess, if I am so happy to obtain her from thy hands, shall not Agamemnon dread the resentment of a lover and a husband? If it was necessary that so dear a victim should be delivered to the Greeks, if the interest of Greece demanded it, Achilles would be capable of sacrificing his love to the public good." Or as Dolce expresses it.

"Suo dedit'era havermi fatto conto  
 "L'intento suo, & datomi la figlia;  
 "Che l'havrei forse conceduta anch'io  
 "A tante bellicose inclite schiere,  
 "Se pur l'andata à Troja (ch'io no'l credo)  
 "Attender si dovea da la sua morte.  
 "Ch'anch'io bramo l'honor, l'utile, e'l bene  
 "De la famosa Grecia, &c."

Secondly, his refusing to see Iphigenia, although Clytemnestra gave him so fair an opportunity, when she offers to bring her herself to pay her acknowledgments to him. Thirdly, after having seen her, and that he is become enamoured with her beauty, the generous resolution she takes to devote herself should have such charms for him, as to make him calmly resign her to death, and promise her his assistance, only in case she should repent of this resolution, in which he is so faithful to his word, that he actually suffers her to die, and contributes to the sacrifice himself, by pouring libations! Certainly he appears a very extraordinary kind of lover to us. Dolce represented him thus in Italy. Rotrou would not venture to do the same in France, much less Racine. Neither of them can be condemned; but ought we therefore to condemn Euripides? He writ to the taste of his audience, as our poets do now to theirs. But let us resume these three articles.

And first, Achilles has reason to answer Clytemnestra, rather like a hero who has been affronted, than like the lover of Iphigenia; since having never entertained any design of demanding her

in marriage, the desire of glory acted more powerfully upon his heart than love. He shews his disinterestedness likewise, by giving the afflicted mother to understand, that in the resolution he has formed to save Iphigenia, he is less influenced by his passion for the princess than his regard to justice.

Secondly, Clytemnestra asks him, if he is desirous that Iphigenia should appear before him, and pay her acknowledgments to her protector. He refuses, indeed, to see the young princess; but this refusal is founded upon his strict regard to the severity of the Grecian manners with respect to women. He alledges very good reasons for declining this offer: and this also proves the disinterestedness of his zeal in her service.

Thirdly, It is certainly more difficult to conceive how Achilles could suffer his Iphigenia to die, only because she had devoted herself. But (as we have already observed) if we reflect upon the reverence the ancients had for these consecrations, and for such persons as voluntarily devoted themselves to death, we must acknowledge, that Achilles could not act otherwise, without rendering himself execrable by a crime of the highest impiety. Yet he employs the tenderest motives, the most ardent intreaties to prevail upon Iphigenia to alter her resolution. He cannot but admire her for that noble resolution; but he omits no argument which he thinks is likely to dissuade her from it. He even goes well armed at the head of some of his faithful soldiers to surround the altar, that upon the least sign made by Iphigenia, or the slightest appearance of a change in her intentions, he may deliver her. He hopes that she will consent to it; but in vain. The princess has taken her resolution, and Clytemnestra, although in despair of saving her, yet requires not Achilles to shield her from the sacred knife contrary to her vow. We are therefore to enter into the character of these three personages by attention to an act of religion: and this alone removes the difficulty, notwithstanding the improbability of rendering this incident conformable to our ideas.

However convincing these arguments in favour of Euripides may appear to me, yet I am sensible, that they will not be easily relished. There are no arguments of force enough to remove that prejudice which takes its rise either from contempt of the ancient manners, or from the oblivion which covers them now. The most that I pretend to is, that my readers should either hold Euripides excusable, or consider the age he lived in as absurd and ridiculous. This alternative will admit of no medium; and it may serve for a justification.



justification of all the objections which have been made to the ancients, respecting their manners and customs : for who will venture to pronounce, that Athens, so distinguished for learning and wit, should be so far deficient in taste and judgment as to applaud the most palpable absurdities ? To assert this is to contradict one's self ; it is attributing to an age, and to an author, qualities directly opposite. If critics pretend to discover only ordinary errors, such as by the fate of humanity are connected with the most perfect things, doubtless there would be no contradiction in their censure here : but it is not these errors alone which they charge upon antiquity. They see others of a more extravagant kind, and those with the most striking beauties : so that we must necessarily conclude their censure to be contradiction, or have recourse to an examination, to know which is in the right, our age or that of Euripides, for example ; and whether the Achilles of Racine would not appear as ridiculous to the ancient Greeks as the Achilles of Euripides to us.

With regard to Racine, his fame, which increases in proportion as he becomes an ancient to us, cannot be concerned in the parallel we have ventured to draw between this great poet and his model. He will not lose by being compared with Euripides ; but as this comparison does honour to the ancients, from whom he has acquired that just taste and close imitation of nature which render him so pleasing to the French, I thought I could not fix upon a better method of making the reader sensible of the beauties of Euripides than by comparing them with those of Racine.



END of the FIRST VOLUME.

